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HISTORY  
OF  
EDGECOMBE COUNTY  
NORTH CAROLINA

BY  
J. KELLY TURNER *and*  
JNO. L. BRIDGERS, JR.

RALEIGH  
EDWARDS & BROUGHTON PRINTING CO.  
1920

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TO

THE MAKERS OF EDGECOMBE COUNTY HISTORY

—PAST AND PRESENT—

WHETHER UPON THE FIELD OF BATTLE;

IN THE HALLS OF STATE;

OR THE HUMBLE HOME;

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



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## INTRODUCTION

This work was begun several years ago, while Mr. Turner was a student at Trinity College. It has been completed with the co-operation of Mr. Bridgers, after interruption due to the World War. Certain features of their labors deserve mention.

The careers of individuals and the description of notable events are subordinated to the treatment of movements, industrial, economic and political. The dominating theme is the environment and activity of the average man as involved in organs of government, labor systems, religion, education, economic life, and political affairs. For information and data the authors have utilized a wide range of material, manuscript records, laws, newspapers, biographies, histories and unwritten traditions. The work is, I believe, a wider and more varied presentation of the life of the people than is conceived in our county and local histories.

A varied feature of the work is its information regarding that vital but neglected period of local history, the years between the Revolution and the Civil War. There came to maturity institutions and forces which originated in early days. How often are these years of development glossed over in our local histories for the benefit of the tumult and the shouting of martial times!

For these reasons I feel that the authors deserve recognition and commendation for a meritorious as well as a patriotic work.

W. K. BOYD.

*Trinity College.*  
*Dec. 12th, 1919.*



## PREFACE

This volume was undertaken by reason of a deep appreciation for the county of Edgecombe and her worthy history. We never realized the force of Job's utterance, "Oh that mine enemy would write a book," until well into the work. Locating and interpreting ancient and musty records, running down hazy traditions, whose origin is well nigh lost to memory and attempting to verify them, has been no easy task. How often have we wished that we had left the search to that uncertain somebody else. However, out of loyalty to our native county, we have not hesitated or turned back.

The people of Edgecombe are intelligent, law abiding, industrious, resourceful, and progressive; but they are marked by one bar sinister, a most serious fault, that they have not properly appreciated their county, themselves, and the efforts of individual leaders. But they will grow, develop, and broaden with the process of time, and in so doing will stand foremost in all that makes and marks a most notable and worthy people.

We have labored faithfully to record Edgecombe's past. Doubtless we have made mistakes and errors; but we say to those who would criticize, "Do not tell us of our errors and mistakes, but report them to the next one who will be so bold as to undertake to write a history of Edgecombe.

Pictures of many men, which deserve to be inserted, are not, because after earnest and diligent effort copies could not be procured. This history is put forth, trusting that it may be received in the spirit that impelled us to write it.

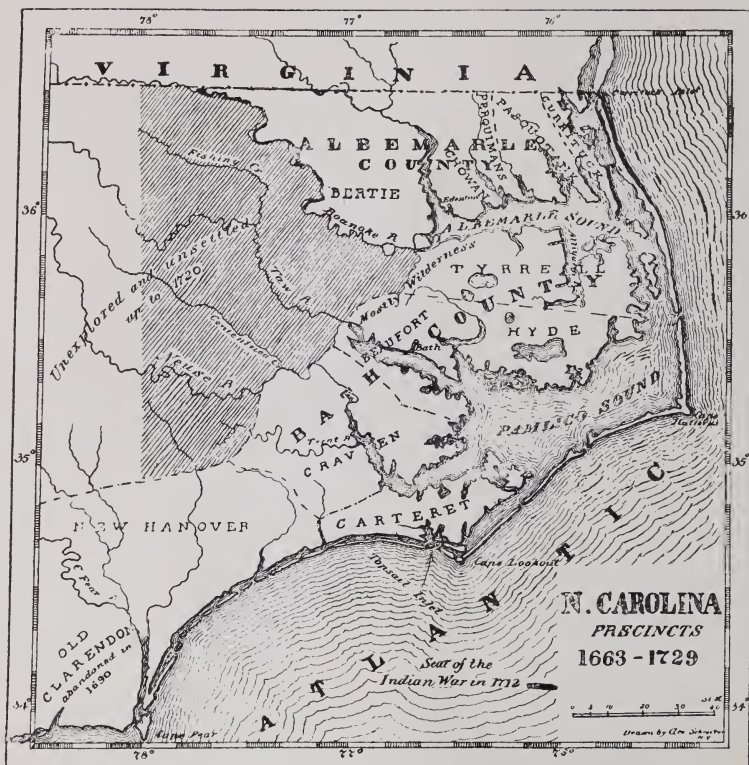
Grateful acknowledgments are hereby made for the assistance given by Dr. L. R. Wilson, Chapel Hill; J. P. Breedlove, Librarian of Trinity College, Durham, N. C.; A. T. Walston, R. H. Gatlin, Frank Powell, Miss Sarah Norfleet, Rev. B. E. Brown, Mrs. T. W. Thrash, late J. B. Bradley, H. S. Bunn, Tarboro, N. C., and R. D. W. Connor, Raleigh, N. C. Especially indebted are we to Dr. W. K. Boyd, Department of History, Trinity College, of Durham, N. C., for helpful criticisms and inspiration while writing these pages.

December 12, 1919.

J. KELLY TURNER,  
JOHN L. BRIDGERS, JR.







## CHAPTER I\*

### ORIGIN AND SETTLEMENT

Many years before the appearance of civilized man in the new world, even ere the daring eye of the brave mariner wandered across the waters of the Atlantic, the forests of the Albemarle section in North Carolina were traversed by roving savages. Whence the aborigines came has never been discovered, and their origin will in all probability remain an enigma as long as time shall last. On the upper waters of Tar River dwelt the Tuscaroras and the Cotechneys, the most numerous and warlike of the North Carolina Indians, who roamed the forests and fished the streams at will. Torhunte, an Indian town, situated on the River Tar, was occupied by these tribes until the year 1712. This village and Tosneoc,<sup>1</sup> about twelve miles from the present town of Tarboro, were the gathering places for the Tuscarora tribe. Here they assembled to plan their wars, and reassembled again after the conflict to divide their spoils and captives.

It was late in the fall of 1656 that a small scouting party left the northern confines of Virginia and settled in the northeastern part of the Albemarle section. The settlements, which were then continuous until the beginning of the eighteenth century, was arrested by a sudden outbreak of Indians. However, temporary peace about 1710 placed new desires among the settlers to open up new locations and to penetrate deeper into this unexplored region. At this time the early expansion from Albemarle began. The Tuscaroras on the west, although still a strong and brave tribe, were not unfriendly in their disposition. Their hunting grounds that lay on the Neuse, Roanoke, and Tar Rivers had not been encroached upon, and they gave every indication of enjoying a free trade with the whites, who supplied them with the commodities they most desired.

The migration was slow. A few young men, more energetic and with a more restless disposition than their neighbors, determined to seek new lands in a more fertile country. There were probably only fifteen or twenty men who came from Nansemond

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\*Do not read this book unless you have read the preface.

<sup>1</sup> Tosneoc was also a principal Indian village and gets its name from the Tar-paco River, which later became Tar River.



by way of the wilderness to the frontier of the Albemarle section, with no provision or equipment, except a rifle and a bag of ammunition, to supply their needs. These men did not come as conquerors, nor as outcasts.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century peace reigned in Virginia; the freeman enjoyed more or less religious liberty, and representative government. No oppression from religious creeds or political dogmas that hampered the settlers in later periods induced the party to leave their peaceful homes. The men were daring, hardened, and sturdy Virginians, nourished in the love of adventure, and defied the dangers lurking in a primeval forest.

Among the early settlers were men who bore the names of Battle and Jarvis, who came in peace, and purchased lands from the Indian King and became staunch friends of the natives. This small band soon discovered, however, that their early purchases did not carry them beyond the limits of Virginia, and the rents imposed by the Virginia colony pushed them further westward, across the Roanoke. Men of freedom-loving natures and with desires for a freer life than the civilization of Virginia offered, they penetrated deeper in the wilderness to avoid the tithes levied by the Virginia government.

The Governor of Virginia resented the situation of the settlers in Albemarle, and while the movement was in progress, sent instructions to make the rents more onerous upon the settlers who had purchased lands and received deeds from the Indians. The Governor accordingly required all who had secured lands to take out patents from him and pay the customary tribute. Many patents were issued, but the more restless element moved on westward to the Roanoke and Tar. By 1720 the shores of the Chowan were well occupied, while the Pamlico was inhabited forty miles above Bath Town, almost touching the bounds of what is now Edgecombe County.

In the meantime the dissensions in the colony at the opening of the century involved the Indians, who took part with one side or the other of the political contestants. Shrewd politicians led the Indians to believe that the new Governor, Hyde, who arrived in the meantime, was a person to be distrusted by them, while the rapid growth of the whites in the south along the water courses of the Pamlico and Neuse created fear among them lest they



should be forced back and finally driven from their old hunting grounds. The fears held by the Indians proved to be not in vain.

The influence exerted over the Indians by the schemes of ignoble men brought destruction upon the heads of all. Indians wandered throughout the land at their leisure, destroying the farms of the temporary settlers, confining the inhabitants themselves to their forts. Industry of every kind was checked by the devastation and terror of the savages, thus checking the settlements in the region that afterwards became Edgecombe.

Another cause that retarded permanent settlement was probably the method of living by the people. Their life was one of satiety. If one would give full credence to the reports returned by the early explorers, it must be concluded that the men avoided every task involving physical labor and inconveniences. Lawson says some of the men were very laborious and made improvements in their way, but that this character could not be applied in general. The indication of enjoyment and pleasure away from the settled lands of the Old Dominion gave them no incentive for physical activity. Possibly there was no section in the colony where a subsistence suitable to the majority of the settlers could be so easily procured than in this fertile country which afterwards became Edgecombe. The principal employment was that of hunting, fishing, rearing horses and cattle. The level plains covered with nutritious grasses were the home of wild horse and cattle. Agriculture was not developed or encouraged in any form. Indeed, the living conditions of the settlers was on the same plane with that of the savage—both being accustomed to eat meat without bread. Women were the more industrious sex, making all the cloth and keeping the household supplied with articles of wear.

The tranquil ease of the fast increasing whites and the dislike for their civilization engendered a hate in the breast of the savage that found satisfaction only at the expense of massacre and murder. The untrammelled plains and forests had been the home of the red man in times of peace and war. From time immemorial he had roamed the hills unconscious of the dangers from the pale faces across the seas. An Indian uprising was directed against the defenseless settlers; innocent women and children fell victims to the slashing tomahawk of the bloodthirsty savage.

Many people fled, leaving their rude huts to be consumed by the flames, and returned to Virginia, whence they came. A fort of protection was hurriedly built at Reading's plantation on Tar River about 1720. The remaining whites gathered here to repel the attack and to protect their lives. The Tuscaroras and the Cotechney Indians combined to storm the fort at an untimely hour. In the meantime the Indians had been considerably weakened because of a lack of provisions. The onslaught was made, however, but was successfully repulsed by the defenders of the fort. The leaders of the colonists, assisted by John Moore, who remained at Fort Reading for a month with his army, negotiated with Tom Blount, the Indian chief of the Tuscaroras, for peace. Before the truce had expired for the negotiation, and before the Indians could recuperate from their long period of hunger, Colonel Moore was aided by a new army. The struggle against the whites then became futile, and the majority of the Tuscaroras departed from this section to New York, after Torhunte had been destroyed by Colonel John Barnwell in 1712. King Blount and his people were given a reservation between Tar and Neuse Rivers. They remained here until the second migration of whites to Edgecombe in 1732, and then were removed to Roanoke River at the request of the Indians themselves.

The Indian war, although destructive and depressing, resulted in great benefit for the future welfare of the settlers. The weaklings were frightened by the warfare of the Indians and returned to Virginia. This made way for the migration of the better type of industrious settlers from Virginia, who sought the fertile lands upon the Tar, Roanoke, and Neuse Rivers, and their tributaries.

When the Lords Proprietors outlined their policy for the colony of Carolina, they established four counties, Albemarle, Bath, Clarendon, and one in the south. Albemarle, the vast territory between Weldon and Currituck, was later divided into six precincts. Chowan,<sup>1</sup> one of the largest, contained all the territory south of the Virginia line and north of Albemarle Sound, extending westward to the extreme limits of the colony.

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<sup>1</sup> Colonial Records, Vol. III, pp. XIII, says: Albemarle was divided into six precincts, Chowan, Perquimans, Currituck, Pasquotank, Bertie, and Edgecombe. This is probably an error in copying from the original laws. Edgecombe could not have been an original precinct, since in 1732 a request was made to erect Edgecombe Precinct.

By 1722 settlements in this vast territory west of the Chowan had extended so far that it was necessary for a new precinct to be established. This new precinct was called Bertie, and contained all the territory west of the Chowan River.

A few years after the Indian troubles a new group of settlers were led across the borders of Virginia into the more western parts of the newly erected precinct.

This second tide of immigration was mostly of the highest type of manhood of Virginia. The law of primogeniture, then enforced in that colony, gave to the oldest son the sole hereditary right and compelled the younger males of the family to cast their lot away from home or become clergymen. Many of these young men were of a roving disposition and were imbued with an adventurous spirit. The church did not appeal to them as a profession, and they cast their lot on the more western frontier. Although the majority of the early settlers were of the gentry type, there were also many of the servant class, who came after having served the time of their indenture. They were anxious to secure farms of their own and live an independent life apart from their former masters. Many others came also who had no other desire than to get out of the borders of the Old Dominion.

Just as the first permanent settlement in the colony began at the mouths of the rivers, the interior settlement of this section began at the mouths of the creeks, expanding as the remaining Indians were driven toward the frontier. The mouth of Town Creek marked the beginning of the settlement in 1720. Two years later the present vicinity of Tarboro was settled by a small party of young Virginians. Here the land was undulating and very fertile in the low grounds of Fishing and Swift Creeks and Tar River. Rippling brooks made frequent water courses, supplying an excellent pasturage for the settlers' cattle. The settlers encountered many hardships in establishing homes in this region. The Indians, although conquered and weakened by previous wars, were not satisfied with the daily encroachment upon their homes. They were, however, gradually driven southward toward the colony of Bath across from Contentnea, as the settlement progressed. Here they erected forts after their crude fashion and lived in safety until besieged and annihilated by the rapidly increasing colonists.

The western part of Bertie Precinct increased rapidly in population, making progress both in civilization and importance. By 1723 there were twenty families on Tar River alone. Among the freeholders here in 1723 were James Thigpen, Thomas Elliott, Paul Palmer, James Anderson, Francis Branch, Samuel Spruill, James Long, Thomas Hawkins, William Burgis, William Arrenton. Some of these families still have representatives among the county's citizens, while the counties of Halifax and Nash, when cut off, carried some of these settlers, and their descendants also live in those counties. Paul Palmer was one of the strongest Baptist preachers of his time and created a strong religious sentiment among the colonists.

Settlers were also locating on both sides of the river. Primitive methods for building were adopted, while the forests yielded an abundant supply of tar, pitch, turpentine, staves, and raw products for export. The influx of whites became still greater as the Virginia lands lost their fertility through continuous cultivation of tobacco. The slow running rivers and creeks in the precinct attracted many eager seekers for rich soil.

Crude houses were also built of logs to furnish shelter until permanent settlement could be made. The logs were notched and were probably put together in the same fashion as many remote country homes were in the nineteenth century. Between the logs, split poles chinked with mud were securely fashioned. The chimneys for the most part were wood, the foundation and body being built up to the funnel with split sticks daubed inside and out with sticky clay to protect from excessive heat. The inside of the fireplace was covered with mud in the same manner, and measured from five to six feet in length and two feet in depth. Lumber was sawed by hand before the erection of saw mills.<sup>1</sup> In 1730 the first mills made their appearance and gave the settlers more convenience in home building.

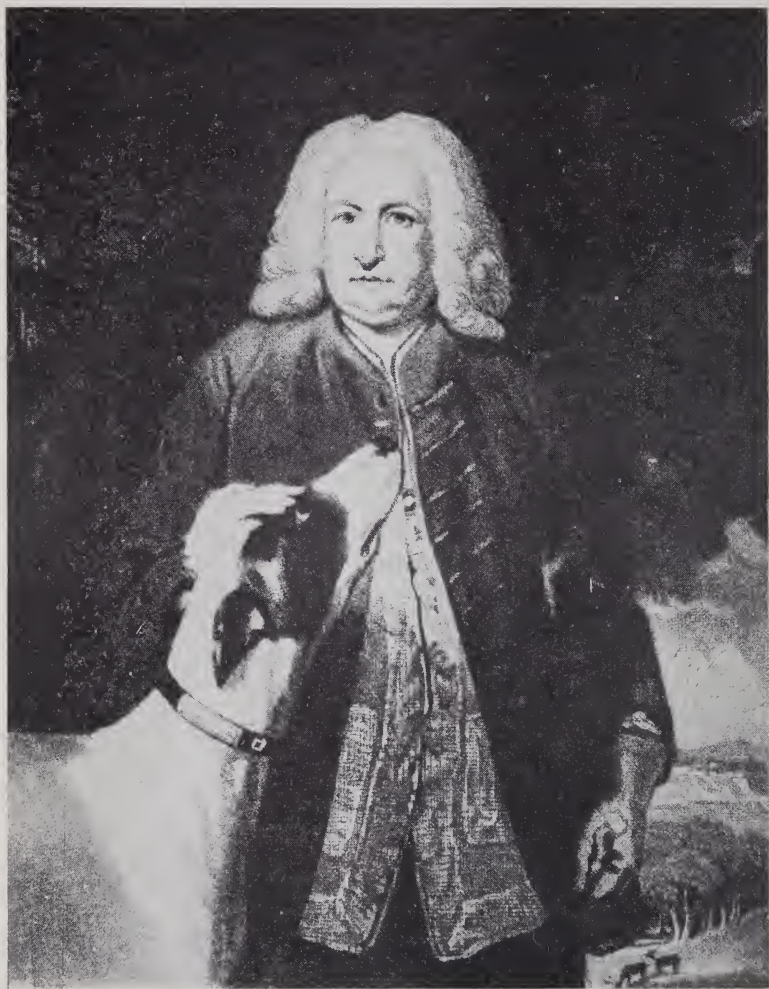
The houses were usually covered with cypress boards, three feet long by one broad. These were attached to the rafters by the use of pegs, while the doors were supported by wooden hinges. Wooden locks were also employed to secure the door and protect against night prowlers. The houses were hardly ever larger than 25 x 15 feet, one room sufficing for a sleeping and cooking apartment for the entire family.

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<sup>1</sup> Saw mills were driven by water power, and finally horses were employed.







LORD EDGECOMBE

The constant increase in population was not without political bearing. A demand was created for representation in the law-making body of the province. Consequently when the Assembly met in Edenton, May 6, 1732, as called by Governor Burrington, the people residing on Tar River and the south side of the Roanoke River presented a petition to the Governor and his Council requesting that a new precinct be erected, giving them the same privileges that the other precincts enjoyed. The Governor and Council acted favorably toward the petition, and ordered the precinct of Bertie and the district on the south side of Roanoke River to appoint commissioners to measure the bounds which were to make a new precinct called Edgecombe. The newly erected precinct was named in honor of Richard First, Baron of Edgecombe, of the manorial House of England. He was born in 1680 and died in 1758. He received his education at Trinity College, Cambridge, and became very prominent in English politics. For several years he was a follower of Sir Robert Walpole, and attended to his interests. He was elevated to a peerage in 1742, one year after Edgecombe Precinct was confirmed. He was also Lord of the Treasury. The boundary extended from the south side of Roanoke to the north of Canocanora Creek to Blount's Old Town on Tar River, including the territory of the present County of Martin and the upper part of Pitt. The dividing line extended between Neuse and Tar Rivers, embracing all the area to the northeast branch of the Cape Fear River, touching the present vicinity of Mt. Olive in Wayne County.

In October of the same year the inhabitants on the south side of Maratock River, which was not annexed to Edgecombe Precinct from Bertie by the Governor and Council, presented a petition that they also might be added to Edgecombe. The territory from Hawkins Line at Rainbow Banks<sup>1</sup> to Blount's Old Town on Tar River and the land direct up Roanoke River to the boundary line of Edgecombe Precinct, accordingly was added to Edgecombe.

By the annexation of this additional territory, the bounds of the precinct were greatly extended. The entire territory lying between Roanoke and Neuse River west of Tarboro vicinity and northeast of the Cape Fear River became a part of Edgecombe.

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<sup>1</sup> In the vicinity of Hamilton, Halifax County.

Virginia marked the boundary line on the north, beginning where the Roanoke crosses the border of North Carolina colony and extending westward without limits. The boundary on the east of Edgecombe Precinct followed the Roanoke southward through the present counties of Halifax and Martin, a distance of about eighty-five miles. On the south, Edgecombe was bounded by Beaufort and Craven Counties, the line between Edgecombe extending from the present village of Robersonville to Walstonburg and thence to the northeast Cape Fear, touching Mt. Olive. The western boundary followed the Neuse River through Selma in Johnston County, taking in the site of the present town of Clayton. At Clayton the boundary extended to the Cape Fear again, touching Merry Oaks, then followed Haw River, including the present counties of Orange and Caswell, a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles.

This scope of vast territory, covering so many square miles, contained more than seventeen of our modern counties. Governor Burrington was aware of this immense stretch of land when he wrote the agents in London that the precinct of Edgecombe was a large territory, and he hoped to see it soon divided into several other precincts.

The Assembly met early in the spring of 1733 at Edenton, at which time the erection of Edgecombe was confirmed by the Council. At the same session Governor Burrington appointed Captain John Spier and Captain William Whitehead, two worthy citizens, as Justices of the Peace for the precinct. These two men were among the earliest settlers, and were afterwards honored with trustworthy and honorable positions in the county government.

The confirmation by the Council of Governor Burrington's action, declaring Edgecombe a precinct, aroused the animosity of prominent officials in the colony. Nathan Rice and John Ashe especially questioned the action, and began a hostile movement against the Governor. Mr. Rice was a Commissioner from England, and, like Mr. Ashe, was also a high official in the Governor's Council when the royal government was first established. These two men had other political grievances against the Governor and his policies. Many controversies had been waged by them against Burrington previous to this time. The objections to the new



precinct of Edgewcombe were to the effect that the Governor followed the procedure of a former administration that erected new precincts to aid him in future elections.<sup>1</sup> These charges, while greatly exaggerated, contained an element of truth.

Personal differences and political opposition became greatly embittered when Burrington cast Mr. Ashe into prison for a trivial offense. While this matter was in progress, Burrington's high temper drew him into personal antagonism with Chief Justice Little and other officials. Numerous letters, claiming the erection of Edgewcombe unconstitutional, and that it would cause unequal representation of the people, were addressed to the Crown by Ashe and Rice.

During the latter part of April, 1733, these two gentlemen wrote their reasons for the objection to the action of the Governor and Council. They claimed that the Governor's methods were destructive to the existing constitution of the legislature, whose powers were "separate and distinct," for the increase of precincts by the Upper House, thereby adding more members to the Lower House, would cause said Lower House to be dependent upon the Upper House and subject to its dictation. They also declared that the erection of the precinct was illegal in that it was done without royal instruction and royal license.

Governor Burrington met these objections by saying that the people on the south side of Roanoke and Tar Rivers requested to be erected in a precinct called Edgewcombe. He claimed that it was not a new practice for the Governor and Council to erect new precincts, and that the people living in the newly erected territory were enjoying personal liberty and property rights.

It is very probable that malice and the desire to show a zealous cause for the support of the privileges of the Lower House caused Ashe and Rice to create the sentiment in opposition. No protest against the erection of precincts had ever been made prior to this time. Bertie had been formed in 1722 from Chowan, and other precincts in Albemarle had also been made counties with local government by the Governor and his Council. This fact gives conclusive evidence that other reasons, in addition to those of patriot-

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<sup>1</sup> New Hanover had been erected a precinct by the former Governor. In several cases the first action in relation to these divisions was on the part of the Governor and Council, whose proceedings were afterwards approved and confirmed by Legislature. Onslow was laid off in 1733 and later confirmed.

ism, actuated these two men in their contention. It was indeed very strange that the Governor was in danger of subverting the Constitution by a method which had always been practiced, and which had not given the Upper House undue power.

At the fall meeting of the Assembly Governor Burrington refused to sit in conference when the matter was debated, the controversy being so acute. The Upper House discussed the matter at length after the Governor had left the Assembly, and voted that the precinct should be "ascertained" in order that in the next biennial election the precinct could return members to serve in the Assembly. The boundary lines determined were the same that were fixed by Governor Burrington in 1732.

In the meantime, in 1732, Governor Burrington appointed Colonel Henry Gaston, Major James Milliken, Dr. James Thompson, Captain John Pratt, John Alston, Dr. John Bryant, John Hardy, James Spier, Francis Elleby, William Kane, John Pope, and Edward Young as Justices of the Peace, with instructions to hold a precinct court on the third Tuesday in the months of August, November, February, and May of every year. This was the first court ordered to be held in the precinct, and indicated the fixed intentions of the Governor. Several of these justices had been members of Legislature and the court from Bertie Precinct, but were inhabitants of Edgecombe before and after the division in 1732. When the additional land was annexed to Edgecombe in October of the same year, one more Justice, Captain William Whitehead, was appointed by the Governor.

The appointment of justices and the confirmation of the action of Governor Burrington by the Upper House, however, was not sufficient to give Edgecombe the privileges of the other precincts. In consequence of much conflict existing between the Governor and the officials, the matter was delayed until 1734. The bill was then introduced again in the Assembly. It was confirmed in the Upper House. The citizens, in order to encourage the passage of the bill, sent an earnest appeal to the Assembly, and were successful in influencing the Legislature to vote upon the bill, favoring the Governor's action. The bill came up again late in the meeting with the petition of the people, and passed the second time with amendments.

In the fall of the same year the Governor met the Assembly for the last time. He had previously written to the Crown for permission to return home, claiming to be ill and pauperized from being in the colony without his salary. The bill was introduced the third time for confirmation, and was about to be acted on when the arrival of a new Governor, Gabriel Johnston, interfered. Governor Burrington had made a compromise with his antagonists—compliments were returned on both sides, and an agreement was made between the two factions in order to reach a state of helpfulness to the citizens and to the precinct. The temper of the Governor subsiding caused a more harmonious feeling to affect the Assembly.

On November 13th Gabriel Johnston published his commission as Governor on the Cape Fear in open Council. This closed Burrington's administration.

Immediately after Governor Johnston arrived legislation was resumed. Onslow and Bladen, two new precincts, were confirmed by the Assembly, but Edgecombe was not considered until three years later, when it was also designated as a precinct by the Assembly.

In the meantime Edgecombe was being represented in the Assembly and was exercising the political rights of an organized precinct. In 1733 two representatives, Captain William Whitehead, and Dr. David Hopper, were sent to the Assembly. Other men in the precinct were recognized officially. Henry Gaston was appointed as a member of the Governor's Council in 1734 by the Governor. One of the most important events, having influence directly upon the cause of the entire controversy, was exposed when Edgecombe asserted her rights as a precinct of Albemarle County in 1734 and sent five delegates, Mr. William Whitehead, John Spier, Bar Maguinny, David Hopper, and John Milliken to the Assembly. This explains to some extent why Messrs. Ashe and Rice, who were from a precinct in Bath County, were adverse to the erection of new precincts. Bath County at this time being so sparsely settled was allowed only two members, where as precincts of Albemarle County was allowed five. This always gave the additional power through representation to Albemarle.

The economic conditions of the precinct were in the meantime influencing the policy of the Assembly. Plantations were selling

cheap; those which contained houses, barns, orchards, gardens, pastures, and cultivated lands sold for about thirty or forty pistoles. The explanation for such cheapness of land is attributed to the fact that the people were in search of new land for their hogs and cattle. This condition was very favorable to newcomers who could always possess convenient and already cultivated farms for less money than the buildings generally cost. A single Virginia planter, Elisha Battle, bought eleven inhabited adjacent plantations in the old settlement. The plantations prior to his coming were inhabited by almost one hundred white people who had moved on further in the interior of the precinct. The newcomer brought with him ten negroes to cultivate the fields, and no whites except his wife.

Parallel with the changing of the small plantation for the large ones with slaves was the immigration of the Swiss colonists into the precinct. Considerable numbers of families came together after the precinct was erected. The Owens' and Holmes' were especially prominent. Many men who afterwards distinguished themselves in political and professional activities came into the precinct at this time. Thomas Blount, Blake Baker, Jacob Battle, Bythell Bell, David Daniel, Ed Hall, John Leigh, Joseph Ross, Laymon Ruffin, Theophilus Thomas, Thomas Jarvis, and John Jenkins, who became merchants, lawyers, doctors, with many others of mechanical professions made their entrance during this tide of migration.

The intellectual life of the precinct was stimulated, and the governmental policies of the colony were influenced by these newcomers. Edgcombe became recognized as an influential part of the province. Her citizens were honored by the Governor, who offered to them political positions, while others became equally as prominent as traders and merchants.

It was natural that the new settlers should approve of the attitude adopted by Governor Burrington in erecting Edgcombe. They defended his policies of 1732 by delivering lectures, hoping to effect thereby the action of Governor Johnston. They did this also to protect their interests in governmental and commercial policies in 1735. The people considered their liberty infringed upon and that their possessions, which they had settled and improved after hard toil and privations, were in danger of unjust



laws. Should Edgecombe not be recognized as a precinct and allowed representatives to sit in the Assembly, there would be no method whereby these people would be protected against the discriminating laws of the Legislature. The opposition to the erection of Edgecombe was charged to a few of Governor Burrington's personal enemies. These men claimed that those who were adverse to the former Governor's action were not aware of the inconveniences the inhabitants were subjected to in the election. These few men who were predisposed to object, became the object of the scorn and displeasure of the entire precinct, and were deprived of the political support they otherwise would have secured from the people of Edgecombe.

In the meantime the precinct still continued to grow rapidly, and increased in civilization and wealth. Men began to settle in great numbers in various sections of the precinct. Francis Parker, in 1745, took up a grant for six hundred and forty acres on Fishing Creek, David Hopper six hundred and forty acres on Kehukee Swamp, William Merritt one hundred acres on the north side of Kehukee Swamp, and John Starky received four hundred acres on the east side of White Oak River. The south dividing creek, north of Swift Creek and Maratock River,<sup>1</sup> was settled by a great influx of settlers from Virginia in this year. Simon Jeffries obtained three patents for one thousand acres on Tar River, which extended fifteen miles. At the same time seven thousand acres lying on Town Creek was purchased by a Mr. Boyd. In one year alone over thirty-five thousand acres were granted to new settlers. John Pratt, who was made Clerk of the Assembly in 1736, was also given six hundred and forty acres during this year.

By 1740, four years later, the greatest increase of immigrants reached Edgecombe. Marmaduke Norfleet, William Kinchen, Sam Sessums, Edward Jones, Joseph Howe, Richard Braswell, Elias Fort, William Watson, Josiah Jones, George Suggs, Robert Hines, Andrew Irwin, and Richard Sessums, men who afterward achieved great honor by defending the political and civic rights of their county, came into the precinct, bought and also received

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<sup>1</sup> Now Roanoke River.

by grant much land. During the meeting of the Assembly for this year over fifty thousand acres of land were distributed among the settlers.

The increase of settlers and the more urgent demand for political recognition and freedom influenced the speedy action by the Assembly. Mr. Milliken had presented a request for the people to the Assembly in 1735 to recognize Edgecombe as a precinct. A bill was accordingly drawn up, but no action was taken by the Assembly. The policy of delay was practiced for over eight years, with a bill oscillating from one House to another without permanent action. The bill was merely an object for debate and served as an issue for technical warfare and intrigue between the two political divisions of the Assembly. The discussion was carried on with a partisan spirit. The Lower House, under the charter of the proprietary period, claimed a prerogative to erect precincts; consequently, the action of the Governor was still strongly contested. In the meanwhile Edgecombe, from 1732 to 1741, was governed by the authority of Bertie Precinct.<sup>1</sup> All the jurymen from the precinct of Edgecombe were selected with Bertie's members, and her civil and criminal cases were tried in the Bertie courts. Quit rents for lands in Edgecombe were also collected in Bertie Precinct.

The climax and end to the controversy came in 1741. The Lower House refused to admit members from Edgecombe until the right to admit representatives was investigated. The issue was referred to the Crown, who claimed that the matter was up to the Governor and his Council. The precinct in the meantime had extended its frontier and was thickly settled. Many prominent men, like Thomas Norfleet, were coming from Virginia, and buying land on Maratock River. Who was to guide the expansion in a situation like this, the Governor or a few people with antagonistic principles? Herein lay the basis for political power, the whole cause of the controversy. The original precincts of Albemarle had exercised the right of sending five members to the Legislature, while the new precincts were allowed only two. The Albemarle County was the center of opposition to the Crown and the Governor's policies. The new precincts did not have the

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<sup>1</sup> Edgecombe's jurymen for Supreme Court were listed with Bertie's, and her taxes were also collected with Bertie's taxes until 1739.

reputation of opposing the Governor; consequently, he turned to them in order to accomplish his political ambition. The issue was made clear to the Governor, and in 1741, when the matter was laid before him, he ordered the county of Edgewcombe to be confirmed.

A new era dawned upon the history of Edgewcombe after the confirmation by the Governor and his Council. New progress both in industry and commerce was introduced. Thomas Hall, Thomas Owen, Henry Holmes, Will Owens, made their appearance in the county, bringing large numbers of slaves and white servants with them in order to secure land.<sup>1</sup> John Alston brought nineteen slaves, John Pope brought six white servants, Thomas Kerney owned sixteen slaves, and others possessed a large retinue of servants and slaves with which to cultivate the fertile fields. Agriculture became the greatest industry with a landed aristocracy springing up around the old settlements.

The actual settling of this new section and the accomplishment of new undertakings were no easy tasks. Much labor and exposure to the violent heat of the sun, sometimes with scanty food—an occasional deer or bear or raccoon—were the hardships that confronted the early settlers. Many of these pioneers also fell by the designing hand of cunning savages. Long journeys on the frontiers, lasting for days without necessary comforts, caused intense suffering from fatigue and hunger.

The condition of the early frontier explains why the people were concerned about their political and personal liberties. The one fact that their labor be not in vain and that their property rights not be infringed upon by any discriminating laws or regulations of the Crown or Governor became an issue of absorbing interest. To this end the settlers wrote a rigid request to Governor Johnston in 1741. The laws of grants had been issued by the Governor to subsist for only two years, without regard to the convenience of the settlers. Another controversy was being waged also over settling of land and issuing land grants. The quit rent policy had just begun to affect the economic welfare of the inhabitants. Land had been refused to some of the settlers, disregarding the policy stated in the instructions of the Lords Proprie-

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<sup>1</sup> According to law each slave brought into the colony gave the master the right to claim a grant of land free.

tors. The settlers claimed that if the land did not raise tobacco as well as the Virginia land they had the right to request more land, and for a longer period than the time of two years, stipulated by Johnston. In this case quit rents became payable in other commodities than that of tobacco. Moreover, there were certain discriminations in the levying and collection of quit rents. When the settlement was made by the Swiss in the precinct they were required to pay four shillings per one hundred acres of land, while those already in the precinct and those settling in the first localities were required to pay only two shillings, and the King's agents traveled from house to house in collecting same.

Governor Johnston repudiated the old method when he came, and a protest by the settlers resulted. He alleged that the existing laws were shameful, and that the settlers were attempting to cheat their masters. The settlers replied to his slanderous statements that if such be true, they should be counted fools, rather than cheats, for settling on insecure foundations. In return the Governor charged the settlers with refusing to pay their quit rents. He furthermore requested them to depart from the land of the King.

The controversy increased with bitter rancor. Unpleasant epithets were exchanged on both sides. And when the Governor issued a proclamation between 1738 and 1741 commanding the settlers to pay quit rents in sterling money or bills instead of commodities as formerly, the actual clash resulted. The Governor was requested by the people to withdraw his proclamation. He refused, claiming inefficiency in the previous laws.

In the meantime a bill to collect rents at certain localities had been rejected by the Lower House. The places of payment of rents were entirely too few, and the method of collecting had proved so vastly different from those methods in Virginia and those formerly used in the colony, that a reform was necessary. On October 7, 1736, the inhabitants complained more bitterly than before because of illegal methods employed in collecting the revenues. The collectors had compelled the people who held their lands by grant from the Lords Proprietors to carry their quit rents to specified places, many of which were selected to suit the convenience of the collectors rather than the people. The former custom had been to collect the quit rents at the inhabitants' re-



spective plantations. Extortionate fees were charged by the collectors who used their political office to advance their own personal greed. The fees were increased sevenfold, and those who were hindered from coming to the appointed places were charged an increase of eightfold with extravagant fees extra.

The bill providing for the collection of the various rents having been rejected, the people were secure, and were justified in their protest against the extortionate proceedings of the Crown. Governor Johnston appealed to the Board of Trade in England for instructions. The Governor receiving no instructions, now advised the Crown that unless the old laws were annulled and better ones made, his majesty would have very little authority, for the people were taking especial care of themselves, irrespective of the Crown and government. He also requested a company of troops to be sent in order to insure a better condition of affairs.

The Governor evidently intended to enforce his will and plans by compulsion, if necessary. In 1737 there came an urgent need for the troops which he had requested. At the General Court at Edenton of that year a man was imprisoned for insulting a marshal during the court. The people in Edgecombe understood the offense was non-payment of quit rents. They rose to the number of five hundred, cursing the King with hearts full of rebellion, and approached Edenton with the purpose of rescuing one of their fellow sufferers. So completely agitated were these people over the treatment they had received concerning quit rents that they resolved to be oppressed no further. At the same time they threatened cruel usage to any person who came to demand rents of them in future.

The quit rent controversy subsided when the Spanish War broke out in 1739. Governor Johnston was requested to raise what troops he could in 1740 to defend the rights of Great Britain. Edgecombe and Bertie furnished three companies of one hundred men each, while the Governor said he could have raised more if it had been possible to negotiate bills of exchange. These troops were intended to act under General Oglethorpe against St. Augustine, some few being dispatched on that service. However, that expedition failed, and they sailed for Jamaica, where the British troops had gathered. The losses here were great, due to the lack of co-operation between the army and navy. Some of the troops

engaged in battles in the West Indies, where fever broke out among them, and nine out of ten became victims of this disease. Only a small number of these troops returned to the county.

Before the termination of the war in 1738,<sup>1</sup> a law was enacted directing the Justices of the Peace in the precinct to erect storehouses to receive commodities in payment of quit rents. The Justices of the Peace were also authorized to levy a poll tax to defray the expenses of collecting the commodities stored in the warehouses. The first warehouse was established at John Pratt's. Later this same warehouse was moved to Marmaduke Kimbrough's near the fall of Maratock River, the distance to Mr. Pratt's being too far for the inhabitants of North Edgecombe. By this new law the people were obliged to pay the expenses of the men collecting the taxes for the King. Moreover, while the legality of this act may be admitted, it did not grant justice to the people as a whole. The poor were sorely oppressed, because the families who had only a small amount of land were required to pay more than a small family with a large amount of land.

Happily for all concerned Governor Johnston was not able to enforce his views. The law had been in operation for only a short time when the Governor received instructions that it had been disallowed by the Crown. This bit of information was sadly humiliating to the Governor, who had labored incessantly to secure the passage of the bill. The decision was altogether in conflict with the Governor's views. Specie payments were abandoned. Quit rents were payable in commodities at their market value, and the place of payment was on the plantation. The relief came at the opportune time for the people, and gave them a greater incentive for industrial activity.

The production of tar and naval stores was introduced after the relaxation of this law.<sup>2</sup> In 1734 a large supply of tar for Europe had been secured from the section of Bertie and Edgecombe. The price became so low, however, between 1735 and 1740, that the production ceased. Governor Johnston claimed that the cause for such low prices was due to the fact that the people made large fires in their kilns, forcing the coarse juices of the lightwood along with the tar in order to get a larger quantity.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1739 all precincts by an act of Assembly became counties.

<sup>2</sup> Naval stores were produced very early in the precinct, the industries being conducted on a very small scale.

The tar producers claimed, on the other hand, that in order to make a better quality the old bounty of ten shillings per <sup>1</sup> barrel should be allowed. It is not known whether the additional premium was given. Tar making, however, never ceased entirely. The vast pine forests were filled with lightwood, being the heart of resinous pines after the body of the fallen tree had decayed many years before, and the business of making tar engaged a good per cent of the population. There were also many new saw mills being erected, bricks were burned, and much progress was made in comfortable and respectable living, as well as in profitable commerce. Special seasons of the year, planting time, harvest, the winter and summer, were recognized, and became of high importance to the agricultural population. Frequently the occasions were observed and celebrated with some sort of festivity, such as log rolling and ceremonies involving symbols and physical courage.

In 1744 the entire section of Edgcombe was turned over to Lord Granville as a part of his share of the colony. The people then became subject to his power, in that they owed him rents and advancements for settlement of the land.<sup>2</sup> The Earl of Granville did not display a profound interest in the development of the county. His primary concern was to collect rents, introduce settlers, and to increase his profits by larger agricultural trade and industries. However, the currency in the colony was at this time rated so low that the people were reluctant to pay very much revenue for the land. The earl's rents became greatly in arrears. Matters became unsatisfactory on every side.

In the meantime, for the benefit of a great number of soldiers and seamen, who were discharged from the service of the King because of peaceful conditions, quit rents in 1740 were remitted for ten years, and thereafter the rate was to be one shilling for every fifty acres. This same offer was extended also to men of trades, builders, and farmers. In 1744 a number of people, induced by these encouragements, immigrated to the northern part of Edgcombe County. A hundred acres of land was purchased from James Leslie by the various merchants in the county in order to build a town. The motives for building the town was to

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<sup>1</sup> The Crown in order to stimulate the production of naval stores had been giving a bounty.

<sup>2</sup> The Earl of Granville had refused to sell his share in the Colony when the Lords Proprietors released their rights to the Crown in 1729.

foster a commercial relation between the counties and people. On the south side of the Roanoke River was a healthful and convenient location. Good water facilities and resources for a large commerce were made possible by this stream. The trade of the county was fast growing in importance by means of the steady increase of people. The Roanoke was improved and made navigable. Trade became more effective by reason of large numbers of prominent merchants locating at this place.

The Assembly in 1744 granted the right to erect the town which was already under construction. The village was given the name Halifax, presumably in honor of Lord Halifax, who was a member of the Board of Trade in London. Thomas Barker, Alexander McCulloch, John Gibson, Richard Browning, and Robert Jones, Jr., were appointed trustees to supervise the buildings, laying off the lots, and to direct the affairs of the town until its completion. Four acres were reserved for a central market place; the remainder was cut up into lots. These lots were purchased by the citizens at forty shillings each with the obligation to build houses of certain dimensions which were specified by the trustees. The town had a prodigious growth from the beginning, but it was checked in its expansion for about five years on account of an outbreak of smallpox.

Halifax town immediately became the center of commercial activities. By 1752 the little village was a scene of hustling traders and merchants. Although it was the center for local markets, the interior location of the town and county made foreign trade very unsatisfactory. The Roanoke was only navigable to a certain distance. Moreover, the difficulty of shipping was great on account of the frequent low water. The county raised large quantities of tobacco, but it was generally carried to Suffolk or Norfolk, Virginia, for shipment to England. In these ports the tobacco was inspected by officers appointed for that purpose. The best was selected; the remainder was burned. The farmers were paid just what the Virginia merchant saw fit to give.

Cattle raising was also conducted in a similar fashion. The stock was taken to Virginia and slaughtered. The cattle raiser only received pay for the net meat, while the hide, tallow, livers, and remnants were appropriated by the Virginia merchant. The



same was true in regard to hogs. They were slaughtered in Virginia, salted in Virginia, exported from Virginia, and were sold as Virginia pork.

Parallel with the commercial growth, Halifax became the nucleus of social life in the county. The town became the gathering place for the merchant class, the trader, and the politician, all of whom settled around this typical English borough. Many also became large land and slave owners, and operated large plantations near the town. Few of the men married, but lived a sedentary life of luxury and self-indulgence. Many free negroes and mulattoes intermarried with white women, while in the earliest period there was no recognized social restraint against exogamy to avoid incest. Halifax was the gathering place for all social activities indulged in by the landed aristocracy, such as the dance conducted in English style, the fox chase, and card parties. These social pastimes afforded the men of the leisure class means of occupation.

The production of tobacco about the middle of the eighteenth century was so extensive that new lands were opened up. The old soil for some time had been fast losing its fertility. Consequently in 1746, five years after Edgecombe was recognized by the Assembly, the first settlement of Virginians on Tar River had so expanded that Edgecombe had to be divided. The business of the county became very difficult to handle because of the distance many settlers had to travel in order to reach the place where courts were held. The territory from the mouth of Stonehouse Creek on Roanoke River, and thence across the river to the strip of land between Tar and Neuse Rivers, which was the dividing line between Craven and Edgecombe Counties, was included in the bounds of the new county to be called Granville. The county was named in honor of Earl of Granville, who owned the entire territory of Edgecombe.

A few years later, in 1758, the southern part of Edgecombe and Johnston Counties was cut off and Dobbs County was formed, named in honor of Governor Dobbs.

The system of trade and agriculture was of vital interest after the formation of Granville and Johnston Counties. The large

district west of Little River was cut off, leaving a much smaller area in the bounds of Edgecombe. In the meantime, settlers were still coming in the county. The result of this was a more rapid process of forming and shaping of industries. Tobacco was not planted in such quantities as before. Better roads, fences, and bridges were constructed to aid in better commerce. Waterways were opened up by taxation and swamps drained and put into cultivation. Good roads had been supported by Governor Burrington, but he was unsuccessful in getting any action during his administration. Places of inspection were established in all important places in the county to insure convenience to the farmer. Warehouses for the inspection of tobacco, turpentine, shingles, hemp, flax, pork, beef, flour, indigo, tar, pitch, etc., were established at William Williams' on Kehukee Creek, Howell's Ferry on Tar River, and on Fishing Creek. Agriculture was conducted on a far more intensive scale than when the vast fields were accessible. At the same time the inspectors of the places near Mr. Joseph Howell's and William William's requested an increase in their salaries as inspectors.

In 1754 an Indian uprising in the county affected the progress of the commercial life. When Governor Dobbs came over from England he found the Indian war in progress. The affairs of the colony generally were in a deplorable condition. He called for the militia, and Edgecombe responded, reporting 1,317 men. On Roanoke River in Bertie and Edgecombe there were still a hundred warriors of the Tuscaroras and about two hundred women and children. In Granville County on the west there were the Saporas with only fourteen men and fourteen women. The long struggle with the Indians terminated after about seventeen murders and ten or twelve captives being carried away.

In 1758 the greatest check to progress came when Halifax, the town and commercial center, was cut off from Edgecombe by a division of the county. Considerable inconvenience prevented the inhabitants from attending the courts and many other public meetings because of the large extent of territory. Consequently, a petition was made to the Assembly in 1758 for a separate

county to be called Halifax.<sup>1</sup> The dividing line was fixed between the parish of Edgecombe and the parish of St. Mary's.

The separation of Halifax County from Edgecombe checked the progress and welfare of the county in many respects. The town of Halifax being in the area cut off, there was no borough with which to carry on trade. There remained no central gathering place for public meetings, and no organized activities in any form. Every plantation was a distinct organization of business and social life in itself. To make matters worse, Edgecombe's Superior Courts were to be held at Halifax, its former capital. This would only help the new county and town to grow at the expense of Edgecombe.

The merchants and people of Edgecombe, realizing the situation, acted wisely in formulating immediate plans for a new capital for the county. In 1758, the same year the county of Halifax was formed, seven merchants, Thomas Spell, James Anderson, Aquila Suggs, Edward Telfair, Peter Mitchell, Robert Bignall, John Watson were selling merchandise at the village, Tarr Burrow. Two years later, on September 23d, Joseph Howell, then living on Tar River, where the town of Tarboro now stands, sold to James Moir, Aquila Suggs, Lawrence Toole, Elisha Battle, and Benjamin Hunt, one hundred and fifty acres of land for 2,000 pounds proclamation money of the province of North Carolina. This tract of land lay on the south side of Tar River.

The same year the men who purchased the land were appointed by the Assembly as trustees to lay off a town. A bond of 2,000 pounds lease was given by the trustees as security to Mr. Howell for the construction of buildings and the laying off of the village. The land was cut up into lots, except the lot where Mr. Howell's dwelling stood, a small graveyard and fifty acres, which were to be used as a common for the benefit of the town. The Commissioners were to have rights to all the profits for the period of one year, and at the end of that time the trustees were to pay Mr. Howell the rent of one penny for transferring the property into the possession of the Commissioners. This deed of lease was

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<sup>1</sup> Called Halifax in honor of Lord Halifax.

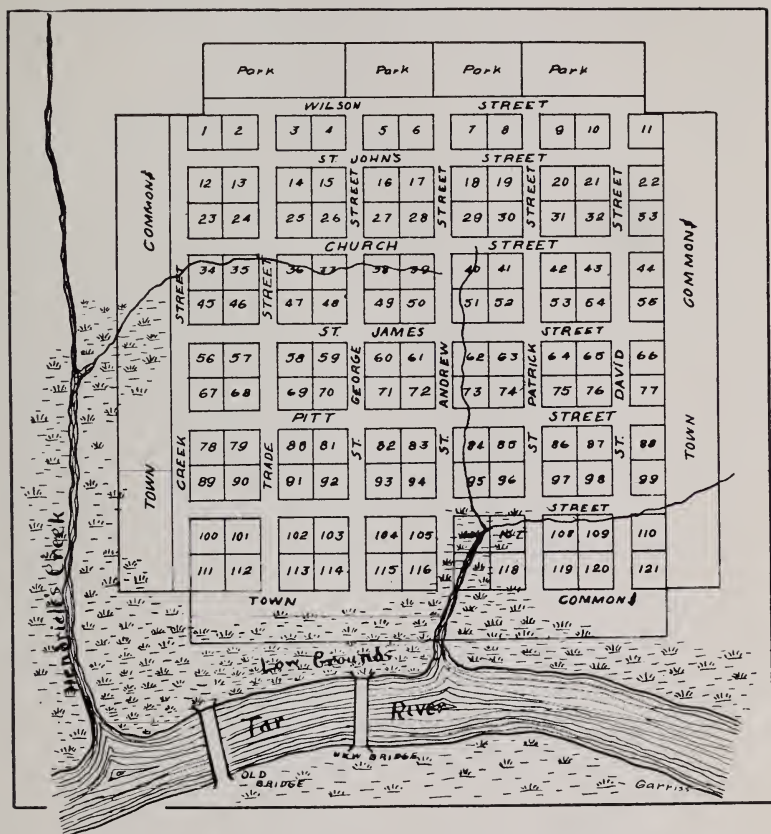


recognized by the court in Tarboro and was attested by James Hall, the clerk, on September 24, 1760.

The Commissioners began the work of surveying, laying off the streets seventy feet in width, and sold the lots to the inhabitants with one-half acre to each lot. The "common" was laid off and consisted of the land beginning where the City Hall now stands. In order to cover the expenses of the pledged amount of 2,000 pounds, the Commissioners took up subscriptions for the common at £2 proclamation money for each lot. The money received was paid over to Mr. Howell for all the lots composing the fifty acres except twelve lots which were used for the erection of public buildings.

On November 30th the town was constituted and called Tarborough by the Governor and his Council. The town, situated at the head of navigation on the Tar River, fifty miles from Washington, receives its name from this beautiful stream. A tradition of Tar River, although spurious is very interesting. The word Tar is a corruption of Tau. A tribe of Indians inhabiting the Roanoke (probably the Tuscarora) was visited every year by an epidemic which carried off large numbers of their tribe. They determined to migrate in search of a more healthful location, and accordingly fixed their residence on this river, which stream on account of its superior advantages to health they named Tau, signifying, in Indian language, health. By an easy substitution of the letter (r) for (u), aided by the circumstance that tar was the principal product on the river and an article of export from Edgecombe County, the name was easily changed to the present name Tar from the ancient and simple word Tau.

There was much interesting dispute among the settlers as to the original name of the river. Following the controversy, in more modern times the name was first spelled Tau, and then Tar. The name of the town was subject to the same change as that of the river whenever the contest was applied. About 1855 an old inhabitant of Tarboro believed Tauboro to be the original name of the town. He said that in the year 1812 a delegation from the Tuscarora tribe of Indians, who formerly occupied this section of



THE TOWN OF TARBORO AS IT WAS ORIGINALLY LAID OFF IN 1760



the county, visited Tarboro. One of the oldest, on being told the name of the river was Tar, shook his head. Then he was told by some persons that they thought the right name was Tau, and he immediately said: "That is it, a beautiful river."

An Englishman, Mr. Sabin, sent an original map of North Carolina to J. C. Hoyt, of Buncombe County, several years ago, which spells the town Tarrburg, and indicates the opinion of those who have been confused and have insisted upon the aboriginal authority of the name Tar River, and the somewhat reproachful suggestion that the petty avocation of making tar on the river originated the name, and accordingly attempted to substitute the name Tar for several years. The name is found inscribed on this map as Tarr, with a double (r). No doubt but that the advocates of the name Tau were justified in their contentions, since Hawks, in his History of North Carolina, supported and published this as being his view. Dr. Hawks formed the English derivation from a syllable of an Indian word, which he claimed to have been the Indian name of the River Tarpaco and now known as Tar River. Dr. Hawks was correct in his guess, but from its present form of name Tar is more closely accurate, and will in all probability be spelled forever as it is now spelled.

The town at the time of its formation was bounded on the north by what is now Wilson Street,<sup>1</sup> running east and west; on the west by Hendrix Creek, running north and south; on the south by St. John Street; and on the east by the New Street, running west and parallel with the present Albemarle Avenue, and the avenue from Hendrix Creek.

The spacious grounds left for the common was dedicated to the public for parks and amusements by the Commissioners. Oaks, which have since grown into large trees, were cultivated, giving a very comfortable as well as ornamental appearance. Today the common bears the impressive stamp of antiquity, with spreading limbs of gigantic branches of trees.

Tarboro immediately became the center for trade. Merchants began to build up a commercial relation with the neighboring centers, and a medium of exchange was declared for the settlers

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<sup>1</sup> Named in honor of Louis D. Wilson.

and the Virginia ports. Tar River had an outlet to the ocean only through Ocracoke, and here the shoals and sand bars made navigation impossible except for small crafts. Insurance on account of dangerous obstructions and shoals was so high that navigation by water was very impracticable. Consequently, all goods, salt, and merchandise were brought from Petersburg and Norfolk over land by pack mules. Whiskey and brandies were made, and traded for the manufactured goods from England which were left at these ports for distribution among the colonists.

The following is a list of the purchasers of the town lots in Tarboro from the Commissioners' Book 1760, which remained in the possession of Elisha Battle until his death:

	Lots	No.	No.
James Barnes .....	1	99	...
Francis Kenner .....	1	19	...
Thomas Barnes .....	1	25	...
James Moir .....	2	73	48
John Scott .....	1	14	...
Benjamin Hart .....	2	85	80
Joseph Summer .....	1	26	...
Thomas Lenoir .....	2	66	9
The Reverend Thomas Burgess.....	2	54	55
James Casy (Attorney).....	1	82	...
Robert .....	1	16	...
William Souther .....	2	101	63
William Foreman .....	2	62	89
Joseph Turson .....	2	3	107
Joseph Cotten, Jr. ....	1	74	...
Joseph Moore .....	1	102	...
John Watsman .....	1	119	...
Com. in care of William Williamson to Col. Alex McCulloh .....	1	65	...
Thomas Mills .....	2	43	17
Egland Haigwood .....	2	120	94
John Tanner .....	2	96	18
Geraldus Tool .....	1	110	...
Lucy Belcher .....	1	79	...
Dudley Whitakers .....	1	86	...
West Duck .....	2	81	88
Elisha Battle .....	2	78	45
John Linsey .....	2	64	6

	Lots	No.	No.
Michael Cotaunch, Jr. ....	2	105	116
Blake Baker .....	1	57	...
James Knight .....	1	36	...
Richard Goose .....	1	53	...
Andrew Little .....	2	42	44
Robert Hardy .....	2	12	83
William Mace .....	1	70	...
Jacob Carter .....	2	9	90
Thomas Harrison .....	2	69	...
Irwin Tool .....	1	91	...
John Agar .....	2	92	8
John Frost .....	1	32	...
Henry Irwin .....	1	84	...
John Gathings .....	1	31	...
William Haywood .....	2	22	59
Joseph Cotten .....	1	11	...
Lawrence Tool .....	1	106	...
John Gilchrist .....	2	59	41
Nicholas Long .....	2	15	28
Sarah Cotaunch .....	1	21	...
John Goodloe .....	1	121	...
James Gibson .....	2	100	23
Susanah Mead .....	2	57	51
Timothy Nicholson .....	2	117	1
Samuel Johnson .....	2	104	68
Walley Chauncy .....	2	47	115
William Kinchen .....	1	67	...
Batt Peterson .....	1	134	...
Robert Palmore .....	2	20	87
Rob Goodloe .....	1	2	...
James Williamson .....	1	5	...
Michael Cotaunchrist .....	2	30	27
Joseph Harrell .....	2	118	4
John Parris .....	2	7	35
James Braswell .....	1	24	...
Jacob Jones .....	1	107	...
John Balmore .....	2	10	97
Peter Johnson .....	1	34	...
Peter Copland .....	2	77	33
John Whitaker .....	2	56	40
John Durien .....	2	46	29
Thomas Goodson .....	1	57	...

	Lots	No.	No.
Edward Fanning .....	2	95	90
Joseph Harrell .....	1	113	...
..	..	38	39
..	..	49	50
..	..	60	61
Public lots as appears by plan.....			
..	..	71	72
..	..	103	114
..	..	75	76
..	..	111	114



## CHAPTER II

### COLONIAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The inhabitants of Edgecombe in the colonial period were subject to a dual government, that of the Province of North Carolina, and that of the local courts. The study of the local court system is a good index to the people's conception of justice and affords a better understanding of the people's history than any other institution. The method by which the people are governed determines in a large measure what the people really are; a bad government makes a discontented people, and a sound government makes a content and peaceful population. There was no institution which came so near touching the just and necessary need of all the people as that of the courts; securing a fair and impartial administration of justice to both the offended and the offender.

There are, however, two distinct facts one should realize in the study of local government. In the first place the territory in the colonial period was transitory and rapidly undergoing changes; consequently, the court system naturally became flexible and was remodeled to meet the demands of the expanding settlement. In the second place the local court system was merely a transplanting of the old English customs upon new soil and as such it was not entirely fitted for conditions in the new world.

The inhabitants of the county prior to 1732 had acquired considerable property according to the grants of the Lords Proprietors; consequently, it was necessary to construct a suitable form of local government to insure the right of property holding. The springing up of a small land-holding class, determined not only the economic and social welfare, but the political life of the people as well. The local government was naturally influenced by the territorial system, and as the county progressed the small landed class obtained a predominance in the political affairs.

The principal and, perhaps, the earliest organ of local county government was that of the Precinct Court. This court came into existence in the colony about 1670, and bore a very close resemblance to the English common law parish of the eighteenth century. It was the chief judicial body in Bertie County when Edgecombe was formed. It was, therefore, only a matter of

erecting a new governmental machinery for the new precinct. The first act in the creation of a new court was to appoint Justices of the Peace to organize a Precinct Court. This Governor Burrington did in 1733, selecting Colonel Henry Gaston, Major James Millikin, Dr. James Thompson, Captain John Pratt, John Alston, Dr. John Bryant, John Hardy, James Speir, Francis Elleby, William Kane, John Pope, and Edward Young to constitute the judicial body.<sup>1</sup> These men were ordered by the Governor to hold a Precinct Court on the third Tuesday in the months of August, November, February, and May. This system was based on the English system of Courts of Pleas and Quarter Sessions. At the next meeting of the Assembly in October more territory was added to Edgecombe, and two more justices, Captain William Whitehead and Captain John Speir, were appointed.

The appointment of justices being in May, 1733, it was August following that the first court was held in the precinct. The exact location for the meeting of this session of the court is not known. It is probable that the justices met at Reading's plantation on Tar River. It was customary for the courts to assemble at various plantations in the precinct until the first court house was built at Enfield in 1744. According to the usual custom one of the justices was denominated chairman, and with the consent of the remaining justices he presided over the court, which was supposed to meet quarterly.

The power of the justices varied from time to time, according to the change of the general law; consequently, it is difficult to be explicit. However, certain powers, such as building roads and bridges, were taken from the General Court of the Province when the Precinct Court was formed. In addition to judicial powers the individual justices were granted specified authorities outside of the court. Among these was the power to marry eligible couples; provided that there was no clergymen in the parish.

In 1733, when the court was first established, it had power to try all criminal cases over fifty pounds in which the penalty did not affect life or limb; to hold orphan courts, appoint guardians, take securities, and to dispose of civil disputes not involving over a hundred pounds nor less than fifty. There was one limitation

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<sup>1</sup> The fundamental constitution provided that the Governor should appoint justices of the peace to hold court upon the erection of a new precinct.

notable in this court in judicial power. No case could be heard twice in the same court under any pretense. Should a case be tried and undecided, it became necessary to buy an appeal and pay a price from five to fifty pounds to the Lords Proprietors.<sup>1</sup> The variation in the price was due to the severity of the crime. Capital cases were usually charged the maximum price and the petty cases the minimum. The results of this law are very obvious. The restriction placed upon the Precinct Courts was at the instigation of the Lords Proprietors and enabled them to collect additional revenue. The appeal cases went to the General Court of the Province for disposal.

There were also many civil powers this court possessed. Thus the court might take probate of wills, receive entry of land, when there were no disputes, and supervise the administration of estates. The latter was demonstrated in a case which occurred in 1758. Abram Ricks, a citizen, thought himself to be fatally ill, and petitioned the court for a supervisor of his estate. John Cowell was accordingly appointed and duly sworn by the court to draw up and oversee the execution of Mr. Ricks' will.

This court furthermore supervised the general management of civil affairs in the county—opening roads, building bridges, and appointing overseers for the public highways of the precinct. It also appointed constables, issued permits for building mills, industrial enterprises, and administered licenses for ministerial work. These functions of the court are illustrated by a noteworthy case occurring in 1761. The first non-conformist preacher legalized in Eastern Carolina, Jonathan Thomas, was granted a license from Edgecombe County Court. Mr. Thomas produced an ordination in writing, signed by John Moore and George Graham, leaders of the Baptist Society, qualifying him to preach according to the tenets of that church. The court, according to its power, administered the oath of allegiance and issued a permit for Mr. Thomas to preach in the Province of North Carolina.

The Precinct Court also exercised power in shaping the early social and mercantile activities of the people. One of the many characteristics the people inherited from England and English life was the fondness for entertainment. Places of amusement found their way into this section early in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Appeal could be made from this court to the Superior Court.

The weary and solitary traveler was not by any means a lonely person in passing through Edgecombe. A mug of ale, served by a gentle maiden, was one of the chief assets of the Colonial Ordinary, and according to the grants issued by the Precinct Court from 1745 to 1767 Edgecombe was fairly well represented. During the year 1761 five licenses were granted for houses of entertainment alone.<sup>1</sup>

The commands of the Precinct Court were executed by the Provost Marshal,<sup>2</sup> an officer corresponding to the sheriff of today. The marshal acted as a deputy to the Provost Marshal of the General Court of the Province of North Carolina, and performed almost the same duties for the Precinct Court as the latter did for the General Court. That is to say, he summoned jurymen in person or by messenger, kept the jail, held elections for burgesses, served writs in civil and criminal cases, arrested criminals and collected public taxes.<sup>3</sup>

The first Provost Marshal or sheriff of Edgecombe was Thomas Kearney, appointed in 1739. He was accountable to no one but the Governor, received his instructions from him, and in many respects became a hired tool to promote the Governor's political ambition. That much corruption resulted from this system we shall hereafter observe. This method was made more odious by the fact that the sheriff's term of office was not definitely fixed. He might be continued in office after his appointment by the Governor, provided he gave good behavior, for an indefinite number of years.

The office of sheriff was the highest subsidiary position connected with the court, the administering of justice and the prevention of crime in the county. This being true the obligation of office and penalty for violation of oath was more severe. In addition of having to take a solemn and binding oath to execute the duties of office agreeable to law, he was heavily bonded against accepting any pecuniary offers of bribes, to show leniency of the law in dealing with prisoners or jurymen; and after 1739 he was

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<sup>1</sup> Permits were granted Thomas Merritt, James Braswell, Geralders O'Brien and Thomas Griffin to run ordinaries.

<sup>2</sup> Title changed to sheriff in 1738.

<sup>3</sup> The collection of taxes was the most important duty of the sheriff. He was provided with a list of all taxables in the county—white males over sixteen years of age; mulattoes of both sexes above twelve years of age, and slaves over twelve—and from this list the provisional or public tax was collected.



not permitted to serve more than one year consecutively. In case of death the sheriff was usually succeeded by some freeholder, who was commissioned by the county court to complete the term. Bond for acceptance and as an assurance of good faith in the execution of his duties was made to the Justices of the Peace of the county. Since the most important duty of the sheriff was the collection of taxes, and as a safeguard against personal use of the funds was necessary, he was required to give an additional bond. The sheriff was, moreover, allowed three per cent commission on all moneys collected, in addition to his regular commission for other duties. Whenever a sheriff was succeeded in office the taxes in the arrears were usually collected by his successor. However, the sheriff in office when the arrears were extant was liable for them until the General Assembly voted the county court the authority to relieve the deposed sheriff. Upon his release from office and the obligations subsequent thereto, the sheriff was ordered to make out a detailed report of all taxes in arrears and turn same over to the county court. This regulation was well illustrated in the relief of Abram Jones, who was sheriff of Edgecombe from 1757 to 1765. During the year 1765 he was superseded in office, and although he was empowered by law to collect taxes after his surrender of authority, he was prevented from doing so on account of an accident. Accordingly, he petitioned for a relief, which was granted by the county court.

In addition to stipulated fees and percentage for the collection of taxes, the sheriff was allowed stated sums for maintaining the prison and caring for its inmates. In case of an execution of a prisoner he was also paid an extra fee. In 1766 Samuel Ruffin was allowed one pound, seventeen shillings, and four pence for imprisoning and executing a negro criminal. Thomas Merritt, the jailer, was also paid sixteen shillings and eight pence as a special fee for attending the same negro during his period of confinement.

The sheriff of the county was allowed assistance in the form of constables appointed by the county court to help him in the execution of his duties. The appointment of constables was frequently made without the consent of those appointed. This worked obvious hardships on those who were unwilling to serve in this capacity. This unpleasantness resulted from the custom of imposing a fine of fifty shillings on any constable who refused to qualify and take an

oath following his appointment. Frequently also constables were committed to prison until a warrant of release was sworn out by Justices of the Peace of the county. This regulation no doubt caused undue embarrassment to those who were engaged in commercial and industrial activities. Later the law compelling a constable so appointed by the county court was restricted to those who could not show a sufficient cause for refusing and neglecting to serve the wishes of the court.

The constable, like the sheriff, was required to take an oath administered by the Justices of the Peace of the county. As a compensation for his services, the constable was exempted from the provincial, county, and parish taxes, working on the roads, and all other financial impositions of the local government. The duties of the constable, as may be inferred from the salaries paid, were not numerous nor very severe. They were called upon to give assistance at stated intervals and during the sickness of the sheriff.

The Precinct Court also had a clerk appointed by the Clerk of the General Court, whose duties corresponded to those of the Clerk of the General Court. He acted in the capacity of both clerk of the court and register of deeds. He, therefore, issued marriage licenses and recorded deeds of trust, and made entries of local court proceedings. He was also obligated to take special care of the transcript or book of laws established by the Assembly of the Province. It was a part of his duty to keep the book of laws open upon the court room table during the sitting of the court for the perusal by such members as desired information. When requested by any of the members of the court, the clerk was required to read the laws furnishing information upon the case being considered. Upon a refusal to act in conjunction with his constituents, the clerk was subject to a fine of five pounds.

The regular court procedure was somewhat similar to that of the Superior Court today—that is, a bill of indictment was presented to the grand jury, and if the evidence of the charges was sufficient a true bill was returned. The case was then presented to the petit jury by the justices for decision. There is, however, one notable exception. There were no lawyers at the county court to prosecute or to defend criminals. Locke, the author of the Fundamental Constitution, had made it a little less than a scandal for a lawyer to enter public life for the sake of pecuniary



gain. The results were that no victim of the law could employ defense. This threw a prisoner upon his own ability and upon his own testimony. It was not, therefore, unusual for men in the ordinary vocations of life to be skilled in the minor technicalities of the law in order to defend themselves or others with credibility. Although this law was repealed in 1747, many of the citizens in colonial Edgecombe continued to study points of law until late in the nineteenth century. John Norfleet was reputed to be as well skilled in the minor points of law as a practicing attorney.

Under the royal administration a few changes were made. The structure of the courts as outlined remained until 1738. During that year the Assembly of North Carolina passed an act which changed the precincts into counties, and the old Precinct Courts into county courts. The organization and function of the court, however, remained for some years the same in purport as formerly. It is well, however, to notice that some minor changes were made in order to understand the legal powers vested in local government prior to the Revolution. The judicial procedure of the county court was not perfected until after 1746, when the county court was reorganized. The Assembly then passed a law for the better establishment of the county courts, and specified that they should be held four times a year<sup>1</sup> by the Justices of the Peace. This same law restricted the number of justices to three, which constituted a legal judicial body. These three justices heard and decided cases where the litigation was above forty shillings and not more than twenty pounds. They also heard petty cases, assaults, batteries, trespasses, breaches of the peace, and various other misdemeanors of inferior cases, forgery and perjury always excepted.

Thus in 1746 the county court became the Inferior Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, meeting on the fourth Tuesday in January, April, July, and August. This court became the court of records and had recognizance of crimes when the punishment did not extend to the point of injuring life or limb. At this time the officers of the court were allowed a salary annually, independent of the fees of their office. Each justice also had jurisdiction when not in court over any litigated account not exceeding twenty

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<sup>1</sup> The county court after 1746 was designated as the Inferior Court and Quarter Sessions.

pounds. He could, if in his judgment it seemed advisable, grant an appeal to a higher court. After 1746 the admonition to the various officers in the county was made more stringent. The justices were obligated not to show partiality in dealing with criminals, nor to be an accomplice to any quarrel in which they might be tried. They were also charged not to receive a bribe or gift, nor accept any compensation from outside parties. In order to effect the letter of the law a fine of twenty pounds was placed upon any justice who entered office without his oath being properly administered and signed. The duties of the justices also were increased. Among other services they were intrusted with the care of the poor and the supervision of parish revenues.

The constable and his duties also became more important. Like the sheriff he was compelled to take an oath that he would serve the King and cause the peace to be preserved according to his power. He was, moreover, charged to arrest all persons caught in fights, those who rode armed offensively, and any who committed riots and disorders in the county. The constable became a sort of deputy, corresponding to the deputy sheriff of today, and was supposed to have apprehended all violators of the peace in the King's name.

The departure from the old precinct system also marked another radical change in the county court. The prosecuting attorney became an official of considerable importance. Prior to 1746 very little significance was attached to a lawyer. In 1757 Edgcombe had its first prosecuting attorney, when Robert Jones presented and prosecuted, as a deputy of the Attorney General of the Province, all cases for the Crown. Mr. Jones was admonished in the office by James Cary, who charged him to prosecute in the King's name all offenders coming within the jurisdiction of the County Court. It was the custom to elect the prosecuting attorney every four years by the Justices of the Peace. This custom was consistently followed until the opening of the American Revolution.

The Inferior Court, by the act of General Assembly, 1746, secured civil powers which had been vested in the Superior Court for the district of Edgcombe. It was, however, two years later before the newly granted prerogatives were executed in spirit as well as in form. Committees and commissions were appointed

among the Inferior Courts to control and supervise internal improvements, and to promote the general civic welfare of the county. Contracts were also issued by the county commissioners, who were appointed by the County Court, for bridge building and road construction. In this manner Culpepper's Bridge was built in 1757. The contract was issued to Joseph Bridgers, he being the lowest bidder. Several similar constructions were made under this commission—Raeford's Bridge, and also a bridge over Town Creek near Wright's plantation. Among the prominent men who served on this commission was Aquilla Suggs, Sam Ruffin, and Benjamin Bunn. The sheriff of the county was made chairman of the commission for public instruction and acted as treasurer in addition to his other duties. He paid all the bills for building bridges, roads, and the erection of public buildings. In the report of the commission for the building of Culpepper Bridge the sheriff was ordered by the County Court to pay Joseph Bridgers the sum of forty-seven pounds, the amount agreed upon in the contract. The Inferior Court also exercised the right to determine disputes relating to estates and to make division of property.

This court, moreover, appointed inspectors of tobacco at the various warehouses in the county for the purpose of supervising and preventing illegal weights. In 1754 Thomas Spell was appointed inspector at Tarboro, and Solomon Williams at Scotland Neck. Later, in 1757, the court appointed George Goodwin inspector at Tar River warehouse and Barnaby Whenny, and Joseph Howell at Howell's and Kehukee warehouses, respectively. In the meantime Berry Heavill, the inspector for the warehouse at Halifax, died and Daniel Selbank was appointed inspector for that place. The sale and exportation of tobacco at this time being one of the greatest industries in the county, it was natural for the court to exercise a supervision over the various warehouses. The warehouses, moreover, were the property of the county; consequently, demanded the superintendence of the County Courts. The Inferior Court also had civil power in addition to criminal and economic functions. Constables who, for any reasons, failed to do their duty according to the law were removed by this court. During a proceeding of court in 1757 William Turner, for some petty violation of his oath, was re-

moved by the court, and Robert Tucker was placed in his stead. Still another instance of this kind occurred later in 1759, when Joseph Blake, another constable, lost his local position in the court house circle and was supplanted by John Jones, who afterwards became sheriff.

During the year 1758 a very important political event occurred. Halifax County was cut off and created from Edgecombe. The citizens of both counties met for the last time in joint session of court, and in December adjourned with formal agreements of dissolution. The Halifax element was to meet the next court session, which was supposed to convene at Halifax town; while the Edgecombe citizens were to repair for the next session at Redmond's Old Field on Tyrancocoa Creek. A few domestic quarrels naturally resulted from the separation, but only one is of any considerable importance.

In February, 1758, an urgent demand was made for an increase in taxes in order to meet the growing expenses for that year. Halifax and Edgecombe, although it was understood that they were to be separated, were considered as one in matters of local government and taxation; consequently, the citizens of Halifax were subject to the increase of four shillings on all taxables which had been levied by the County Court. Halifax, however, was cut off from Edgecombe before the taxes could be collected. When the sheriff called on those members from Halifax who were liable, many refused to pay, and a controversy resulted. Moreover, various disputes arose between the sheriffs of the two counties over their respective boundaries. The sheriff of Halifax claimed that the line began from the head of Coneto Creek and ran to Fishing Creek near Michael Dorman's plantation. He claimed also that the sheriff of Edgecombe overreached his bounds and went into Halifax County to collect taxes. Both of these accusations were disputed by the sheriff of Edgecombe County, and a deadlock ensued.

In order to avert any embitterness and to reach an harmonious agreement, Edgecombe, the mother county, acting through her court, ordered a commission to be appointed composed of John Royal and Thomas Wills to meet a similar commission from Halifax to settle the dispute of taxes and to mark out the dividing line as near as might be conformable to the act of the Assembly



for dividing the Parish of Edgcombe. After some desultory conversation an agreement was reached whereby the citizens of Halifax were to pay those taxes which were in the arrears when the county was formed and the dividing line between the two counties was to be Fishing Creek.

The jury system of the County Court constitutes a very interesting phase of local government. Unlike the method of the present day, only six men were selected for the grand jury and six for the petit jury. In 1757 Thomas Hall, Wallace Jones, Richard Whitaker, John Decece, William Jones, and Thomas Williams constituted the grand jury and James Sane, James King, John Alsbon, Nathan Barnes, Stephen Weaver, and William Wells made up the petit jury. The jurymen, acting with the three justices who constituted the judicial bench, frequently determined matters of a civil nature without the regular court trial. In 1757 the above-mentioned jurymen and John Hardy, James Speir, and Thomas Hall, the three justices of the court, met together and selected a guardian for Henry Cavenah, the orphan of Charles Cavenah. Henry was at the time of lawful age, but was considered incapable of conducting the management of his estate. He came into court and chose Nathan Cavenah, his brother, as his guardian, and appealed to the jurymen and justices to approve of his appointment. Nathan was accordingly selected and placed under a two hundred pound bond by the court.

The officials of the court also exercised the function of qualifying and administering the oath to militia officers. William Barnes, who was the first officer of the militia in Edgcombe County, was qualified at the court in 1757. His rank was not specified, but from the enumeration of his duties it is to be supposed his rank was that of a captain. Dreery Harrington was in like manner sworn and appointed as a military officer at the session of the County Court in 1758.

This court also established rates for produce and merchandise. In 1759 the price for West Indian rum was fixed at ten shillings per gallon; county brandy, eight shillings per gallon; punch, gin, whiskey with sugar, sugar per quart, and lime juice sold for a fixed price of four shillings. Hot dinners with wheat bread, small beer and cider could be secured at a stipulated price of one shilling. A supper or breakfast, hot, could not be sold for over

one shilling. Lodging for a night with one occupant in a bed cost the lodger by the regulation of the court only one shilling and when there were two occupants in a single bed the price was twenty pence. County cider usually sold for six pence per quart. English beer one shilling per bottle, and various other beverages had their prices for sale regulated by the county courts.

The Inferior Court furthermore made provision for religious worship. The first reference concerning religious matters was made in the form of a petition in 1759 by John Thomas and others of the profession of Ana-Baptist. It seems that a Society of Baptists had constructed a meeting house, and a division in the society had occasioned a dispute over the legal owners; consequently, John Thomas, the leader of the Ana-Baptist element petitioned for a claim to the meeting house which had been constructed under his supervision. The church had been built on Mr. S. Thomas' land, near Jonathon Thomas', according to a grant issued by the Parliament of Great Britain. Mr. Thomas was one of the active leaders of the dissenting element and had forcefully closed the doors of the church to the services of the Baptist Society. There is no record of the court's disposition in the matter, and so far as known it was never decided or its legal owners identified. It is very probable since it is known that there was a very strong sentiment by the Established Church against the dissenting element, and that the various members who made up the local judicial body were inclined toward the Established Church, that no action was ever taken in order that the Baptist Society might not retain its meeting house.

In addition to the County Court there was the court of magistrates or a court of single justice which was provided for in the royal period by an act of 1741. This court had jurisdiction in civil cases which did not extend to cases involving more than forty shillings. The magistrate in the court of one justice was also given a power to exercise other magisterial rights; among these was that of inquiring of the "goodmen of the precinct by whom the truth may be known to detecting trespasses and sorceries." The magistrates were appointed by the Governor with the approbation of his Council, and were allowed a fee for all cases coming under their judgment. The executive officer of the court was the constable, who was appointed by the Precinct



Court, and enjoyed powers similar to those of the constable in the English court of one justice. The constable, moreover, made a list of the taxables for the use of the vestry until a regular vestry was formed in the county. He acted also in conjunction with the sheriff of the county and summoned men for the coroner's jury. The magistrate's court, like the County Court, had a sheriff and clerk appointed by the Governor of the Province, whose duties corresponded with the similar offices of the County Court.

There was also another local tribunal, the slave court. Its chief functions were to give a speedy trial to slaves in order to save extra cost to their masters. It was not unusual for the slave owners to be subject to considerable loss on account of his slave being confined in prison awaiting the session of court to meet. The slave court was composed of three Justices of the Peace and three freeholders, who must be owners of slaves. The court usually convened at some convenient place designated by the senior justice, where the trial of the slave was conducted according to the regulation of the Precinct Court. There was one difference, however, between the Precinct Court and the slave court, the latter having no jury and the court determining the facts in the case as well as administering the law. In the slave court the slave could produce evidence in his behalf, and could avail himself of any assistance offered by his owner. The court, after hearing the case, if guilt was established, passed a sentence according to the discretion of its members, imposing either corporal or temporal punishment, or both.

It was the duty of the court also to determine the price and age of slaves when such was in dispute. Frequently when a slave was accidentally shot and premeditatedly murdered, the court fixed the price which was to be paid by the one committing the deed. A good example of this function of the slave court occurred in 1765. A slave of William Mace had run away from his owner and was hiding on Fishing Creek. Word of this was carried to Mr. Mace, and he deputized his overseer to go in search and to recapture the runaway negro. In accomplishing this the overseer killed the negro, and it became necessary for the slave court to ascertain the value of the dead slave in order that the overseer might pay the damage done.

One of the chief functions of the slave court was to determine the relations of the slave to his master, especially in regard to the slave's freedom. Slaves were frequently emancipated for meritorious service for the State and their master. In case a slave was granted his freedom it became necessary to get a permit from the slave court signifying that emancipation of the slave was given at the consent of the proper authorities. There is one notable case in Edgecombe County where a slave was granted his liberty for patriotic service. During the American Revolution a negro, Ned Griffin, belonging to Walter Kitchin, of Edgecombe, was promised his liberty on condition that he serve as a soldier in the Continental Army of the Province of North Carolina for twelve months. The slave accepted the condition of his freedom and began to serve in 1782. In 1784 the court issued a permit liberating Ned according to the terms agreed upon.

One of the first local administrative organizations in Edgecombe County, and also one which appears to have been most frequently overlooked and misunderstood by students of the colonial government, was the Parish Court. This court was purely temporary in the county, and was intended to serve the parish and vestry in promoting religious activities. In the meantime, however, through the absence of the court of one justice the Parish Court was given considerable civil authority and became a prominent factor in local affairs until the County Court was reorganized in 1746.

The parish was not created in the precinct until it was fairly well settled, and then it was without uniformity and never well established. There were no local divisions such as the plantation, township, and districts at this time; consequently, there was no central place of operation for the Parish Court. Efforts were made and were partially successful to form a permanent administrative body, the sole civic functions of which were to care for the sick, poor, and to assess local tax rates. A church warden was appointed in 1735 to raise money by poll tax not exceeding five shillings in currency on each tithable for these purposes. It is very noticeable, however, that Edgecombe County had very few paupers at this time; the rich and fertile soils afforded ample means of securing not only a livelihood, but of accumulating wealth. The greatest incumbrance upon the people was the ex-

penses of the clergymen, and that being insignificant until 1744 the actual services of the parish were limited and of little consequence.

It is true, however, that the Parish Court supervised the care of the highways until the establishment of the County Court, at which time this function was entrusted with officers appointed by that court. In the early existence of the Parish Court the church warden provided weights and measures for the use of the precinct, together with one "fair and large book of common prayer." The vestry also performed certain insignificant functions which were later transferred to the jurisdiction of the county government.

The most important phase of the Parish Court was the part that it played in connection with the political activities of the people. It has been clearly demonstrated that where religious power and political policy clash there is much strife. This obvious fact has been confirmed by the parish in Edgecombe County from 1741 until the close of the American Revolution. In the county there were two factions—the Governor of the Province and his followers, who supported the civil courts, and the minister of the Established Church and his sympathizers, supporting the parish. Each faction was struggling for supremacy and each sought to obtain control by both legitimate and illegitimate means. This condition presented an opportunity for much corruption, from which Edgecombe was not entirely exempt. The struggle finally was one of preponderance.

In order to understand why the parish undertook to reform the politics in the county it is necessary to call attention to appointive power of the Governor of the Province of North Carolina. In the first place the county officers, the sheriff, constable, and jurymen, were largely appointed by the Governor. Those not directly appointed by him were selected by officials who had been placed in office by the executive himself; consequently, the Governor in reality was the central figure and dominated the civil and political activities of the people. The results of this was a court house ring which became self-perpetuating. There was no redress for wrong; no appeal for grievances. Popular discontent never became effective and a resort to higher authorities was almost useless. With this state of affairs one can forecast what the results would be when the Parish Court, under the leadership of some

active clergymen, sought to interfere and improve the administration. It was also obviously impossible during the early controversies between the religious and political factions for the local court not to become involved.

The personal interests of the Governor and the parish's attitude in county politics were made plain in a letter by Rev. Mr. Moir to the Secretary at London in 1765. Mr. Moir made bitter reflections upon the Governor and his actions in regard to the court system in the county. It is very difficult to ignore the personal feelings which are involved in the report. Both Mr. Moir and Governor Dobbs were more bent on securing personal revenge than in effecting a harmonious adjustment of local affairs. In order, therefore, that his side might be placed in the best possible light, Mr. Moir and other churchmen wrote to the Secretary of London that Governor Dobbs' action in adjusting the political situation in the county was very arbitrary and intolerable. He claimed also that Dobbs had treated the Earl of Granville's agent, Francis Corbin, very unconscientiously, and that Corbin had acted very creditably in collecting the various rents entrusted with him.

As a means of retaliation Governor Dobbs sought means, legally and illegally, to keep Mr. Moir, because of his interference in political affairs, out of Edgcombe County. When Governor Dobbs realized it was impossible to accomplish his design through moral force, he resorted to political strategy. In the meantime Dobbs sought to persuade the vestry in Edgcombe to refuse to employ Mr. Moir. In this he was unsuccessful. The Governor then exercised his political power and caused the parish in Edgcombe to be divided in a very unfair manner. In doing this the officers appointed by Dobbs acted unjustly by throwing the expenses of the two preceding years upon the parish they expected Mr. Moir would superintend. In order to keep the appearance of their design from looking too partial, the officers gave the moneys for the parish taxes to Edgcombe, although the taxes at that time had not been collected by reason of the stringent opposition of the county courts, acting in conjunction with Dobbs who had showed preference to the newly appointed parish.

The operation of the political machine in the county was further demonstrated in another maneuver of Dobbs and his followers. Following the settlement of Mr. Moir in Edgcombe



parish instead of Halifax parish, as Governor Dobbs intended, Dobbs caused the county to be divided in like manner as that of the parish. This was done in order to give Dobbs the opportunity of appointing a new sheriff in Edgecombe who could manage the election of the vestries. The result of this is obvious. The sheriff, acting as a tool of the Governor, decided the election against Mr. Moir, and attempted to displace him from the superintendence of Edgecombe parish.

Mr. Moir, however, defeated the Governor upon his own ground, and brought up a point of law which the Governor had entirely ignored. There had been, as a result to the long and continuous opposition to the parish, no vestry in the county for several years; consequently, there had been no church warden. This being the case, it was impossible, according to the law, for the sheriff to take parish money except from church wardens and to supervise the parish affairs. Thus it is seen that the Governor was defeated and the parish gained considerable prestige which had been temporarily lost during the controversy.

In August, 1761, following the church and court episode, Mr. Moir writes that the county is in a great confusion. Whether he has reference to the moral or political conditions, it can only be inferred from a suggestion that he makes in his letter. It is very likely that both the moral and political affairs were in a deplorable condition, for he intimates that many citizens who had labored for a regular minister and support from the courts had despaired of success. The inexplicable state of affairs in Edgecombe was observable by many, and it is evident that the misunderstanding between Dobbs and the leading men still subsisted. The General Assembly of the Province was then in session, and many hoped that something would be done for the more effective administration of justice. Although many accusations by Mr. Moir and his sympathizers were exaggerated, they were not wholly unfounded. The officers on the civil list in Edgecombe County showed very little regard for common honesty and many protests were made against them—so much so, that Mr. Moir was on the verge of leaving, but remained because of the solicitations of neighboring vestries.

It must have been evident that all the appointees for political and judicial positions in Edgecombe were not good. Current

letters in 1760 to the Secretary at London stated numerous objections to the bad appointments of the Governor, and how they were making positions corrupt. Some of these protests came back to the General Assembly of the Province, and Governor Dobbs was sharply censured for appointing bad officials in the county. Governor Dobbs, however, did not heed the rebukes that he received, and repeated the offense by putting in the commission of the peace objectionable characters and other ring leaders of the mob who had supported him in his previous contentions. Many citizens reported their intentions of leaving the county by reason of the unsatisfactory situation and the condition of the courts.

The corrupt officials in Edgecombe was no infrequent thing prior to this time. As early as 1739 Colonel Whitehead and others had been removed from the position of Justice of the Peace by reason of unpardonable negligence and corrupt methods in the execution of the duties of their office.

The church and the courts in the county were very closely related in 1763; therefore, those policies of affecting one frequently affected the other. Matters of religion were usually referred to the court, and the attitude of the courts determined largely the conduct and effectiveness of the church. Especially was this true in regard to the revenue, which was supposed to support the church and its activities. In the days when there was no separation of church and State one may expect difficulties and conflicting issues to arise. Such was the case in Edgecombe County. As usual the minister was the central figure on one side and the political leaders on the other. With all due respects to Mr. Moir in this late day, he was enthusiastic for the revenue belonging to the church. This led him into many unpleasant controversies affecting the local judicial powers. He became involved in a long conflict with two of the Chief Justices in North Carolina, and informed them in person how grossly they acted in the suits instituted for the recovery of Edgecombe parish taxes from sheriffs who had squandered them upon personal needs.

Mr. Moir, moreover, laid spiritual hands upon the political activities of the people, and with scorching words denounced the corruption of the civil officers. The moral intent of Mr. Moir was good, but not permissible in the estimation of the political officials. The stern churchman did himself a permanent injury



when he denounced the leader of a mob who effected the release of Francis Corbin, to the delight of Governor Dobbs. Dobbs had previously made the captain a commissioner of the peace in Edgecombe. Mr. Moir should have recognized this and should have treated the officer with respect due his station. Mr. Moir, however, refused to acknowledge the captain's commission because of his corrupt nature. In 1763 the captain was a candidate for election to the House of Burgesses in Edgecombe, and Mr. Moir conducted the campaign opposing his election. The candidate had the support of the Governor's faction, and, as Mr. Moir put it, "even the Old Huzzah himself was on his side." In Mr. Moir's extensive lecturing tour against the candidate he pointed out the corruptness and immorality of the candidate, and, in his own words, "painted the scoundrel in his own colors." The result was the leader's election never came off. This broadened the breach between the minister and his followers, and the political leaders and their supporters.

As the controversy grew more bitter, Mr. Moir was warned to cease inspecting vestry accounts; since there were no church wardens the vestry revenues had been collected by the sheriff in violation of the law of the province. Naturally Mr. Moir, having the right of the law, disregarded the warning with righteous indignation. The courts were appealed to for a settlement of the controversy; consequently, they became involved in religious matters. The courts having no precedent in this case reached a decision in favor of the church. Shortly after this trouble a permanent vestry was formed in the county, and the religious difficulties were temporarily at an end.

In addition to the local courts there was a general or appellate court,<sup>1</sup> which exercised a general supervision over the courts of Edgecombe, Halifax, and Granville Counties. For more than five years after Edgecombe was declared a precinct, and until the Precinct Court was in operation, the judicial functions of government, and especially the legislative and executive, were exercised by this court through the Chief Justice of the Province. With a few exceptions from 1732 to 1775 Edgecombe was under a provincial Governor. The Crown appointed the Governor, and the Governor selected his own officers to rule over the people. To

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<sup>1</sup> Known as Superior Court.

a large extent, therefore, the officials of the general court were appointed by the Governor and conducted judicial affairs according to his judgment and order. This court enacted all laws for the construction of roads and internal improvements in the county before the Precinct Court was well organized. In order to do this commissioners were appointed to carry out the will of the court. In 1745 a commission for Edgcombe was appointed, composed of Seth Pilkinton, George Moy, Sr., William Mace, John Burney, and James Barrow to construct a highway and lay off roads through the upper part of the county. Civil officers, moreover, of various kinds were appointed by the Governor, with the consent of his Council. When it became necessary for rangers to be appointed in 1766 to appraise and ascertain stray horses in the county, it was the Governor who was vested with power to select men for this purpose. From June 7 to August 7, 1775, Governor Dobbs granted forty-five civil commissions for Edgcombe County alone.

Frequently in exercising the executive power, the Governor made known his wishes to the General Court, which carried out his bidding. The General Court became the Superior Court in 1762. The change took place when the Governor appointed justices to hold a circuit or district court for the counties cut off from Albemarle. After the change from the General to the Superior Court considerable power was given to the local courts in the county. The Superior Court, however, retained the higher authority and overruled cases from the local courts.

The Superior Court also retained certain specified powers over civil matters in the district. It was similar on the one hand to the courts of the King's Bench, Common Pleas, and on the other to the courts of the Oyer Terminer and General Gaol Delivery. The Superior Court's jurisdiction was very extensive, and only very important cases, involving considerable money and punishment, could be appealed from this court to the Governor and Council. The jurisdiction by way of appeal was limited to cases of appeal from Inferior Courts, and in those cases only where sums of money of certain amount were involved.

A very interesting case came under the jurisdiction of the Superior Court in 1767. The court exercised the power of issuing a writ of scire facias to collect money in another colony.

Joseph Howell, of Edgecombe County, had been sued by James Dunlap Merrith, of Virginia. Mr. Howell lost the suit and Merrith had judgment for 2,817 pounds, the amount sued for. Shortly afterwards an error was discovered in the decision, and the case was reopened, and it was found that Merrith was not entitled to damages. In order to recover the money paid by Mr. Howell the Superior Court issued a writ of scire facias to James Moore, sheriff of Edgecombe, to sell the goods, chattels, lands, tenements, to the amount adjudged for damages, which Mr. Merrith had recovered in the suit against Mr. Howell.

Financial matters affecting the rights of the Crown or any of the royal subjects in England were determined by the Superior Court. The question of collecting and adjusting quit rents in Edgecombe was continually before this court for settlement. The quit rents being the chief source of revenue, it was natural for England, and especially Lord Granville, who owned this part of the province of North Carolina, to be anxious to have the management of their monies in the hands of a more direct agent of the Crown.

The presiding officer of the Superior Court held the title of Chief Justice,<sup>1</sup> and, with his associates, sat upon the bench and rendered decisions. This court also had a provost marshal. It was his duty to execute the orders of the court and to summon jurymen from every precinct in the district. Means of reaching various individuals who were intended to serve on the jury were very crude, and the provost marshal had much trouble in summoning the jurymen selected.

The Superior Court, being a court of record, it was supplied with another officer, designated as clerk, appointed by the Chief Justice, and who acted as a scribner for the court. His duties were fully specified and very confining. The law required him to reside and keep his office in the county in which the court was held. He also acted in the capacity of register of deeds and kept probated wills, records of all court proceedings, deeds of trust, and all other papers relative to the clerk's and register of deeds' offices.

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<sup>1</sup> The Chief Justice was allowed 33 pounds, 13 shillings, and 8 pence for every session of court held in the district.

The question of raising and disbursing funds in the colonial period was one of the most important of that day, inasmuch as corruption and inefficiency were constantly arising in matters of colonial finances. In order, therefore, to meet one of the greatest demands, a treasurer was appointed in 1745 for the district of Edgewcombe. It was his duty to collect all monies due the Crown from the county sheriff. The treasurer was also required to travel a circuit in this district and hear complaints arising from financial difficulties at the Court of Assizes in Edgewcombe and Edenton in October of each year. The position at this time was a very responsible one—the treasurer frequently had large sums of money in his possession. The risk was very great because the county was not thickly settled at this time, and there were no banks for the safe keeping of funds. The treasurer, therefore, was required to give a bond of 2,000 pounds for the faithful discharge of the official position. He received as compensation for his services a commission of five per cent on all monies passing through his hands.

The method of selecting and qualifying jurymen is very interesting. A list of jurymen was made up by the Assembly of North Carolina for Edgewcombe Precinct, and their names were put in a box to be drawn out at the end of each session of court by a child for the next session. A just decision of suits and controversies in the courts in the precinct depended on the integrity of the jurymen. It was declared, therefore, by the Governor and Assembly that no person could serve on the jury in either the Superior Court or the Court of Grand Sessions who was not selected, summoned, and properly qualified—that is to say, the justices of the Inferior Court within the precinct were directed before the Superior Court met to nominate twenty-four freeholders to serve as grand jurymen, and twenty-four to serve on the petit jury at the session of the Superior Court. The Inferior Court could not nominate any person to serve as juror at two consecutive courts, nor anyone who had an action or suit to be tried in the Superior Court at the term for which he was nominated. The number of freeholders who could be nominated to serve as jurors from Edgewcombe County was eight. In 1733 the first jurymen served from Edgewcombe County. Any jurymen who failed to appear when summoned was fined three pounds proclamation money unless he could give sufficient cause at the



next court for his non-appearance. In case the fine was imposed upon a juryman the money was paid to those who attended from the precinct in order to lessen the precinct tax. The sheriff of the county was held responsible for all fines imposed upon those failing to serve from the county.

All grand jurors in the county were required to own or manage five hundred acres of land, while all petit jurors had to own or control two hundred acres. One of the instructions issued to Governor Burrington when he assumed control of the Province of North Carolina was to restrict the voting of freemen unless they were freeholders. In 1734 this instruction was re-inforced by Governor Johnston, who refused to admit freemen who were not freeholders to cast their vote for members of the Assembly unless they had been inhabitants of the precinct at least six months and possessed a freehold of at least fifty acres of land. Even under these circumstances the one voting must have had the land in his possession at least three months before he would be allowed to vote.

One of the essential needs for the administration of justice is a court house. Prior to 1742 Edgecombe County did not have a permanent place for holding courts, the justices meeting from time to time on different plantations convenient for those attending the court session. In 1741 the General Assembly of the Province passed a law permitting the Justices of the Peace of the county to lay a tax not exceeding one shilling per poll for two years on every taxable in order to build a court house, prison, and stocks for the county. Accordingly, the sheriff began the collection of the taxes for this purpose and turned same over to the Justices of the Peace, who superintended the construction of the public building. The first court house was built at Enfield, primarily for the exclusive use of the Superior Court. At the completion, however, a petition was made by the local county courts<sup>1</sup> that they might also hold their sessions at the court house in Enfield.

At this time the area of the precinct of Edgecombe was very extensive; for this reason it was to the advantage of the people generally that the Superior Court and the public buildings be

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<sup>1</sup> The General Assembly empowered the Justices of the Peace in Edgecombe to hold their sessions of court here. They were also given free use of the prison.

erected and remain at the most convenient place. Beyond the frontier of what is now Granville County the land was very sparsely settled; consequently, there was no very urgent need for a place for holding court. On the other hand, Edgecombe County was fast being settled and a small urban population was growing in various sections of this district. The Assembly, realizing the necessity for a court house in a central and thickly populated district, wisely selected Edgecombe as one of the three most convenient locations.

Enfield, being the most central place in the district, the court house and prison were accordingly constructed at this place. Enfield was made the county seat of Edgecombe, and all the courts of the county were accordingly held here. This, however, was only temporary, for in 1758 Halifax County was formed and was selected as a more convenient location for the holding of Superior Court; consequently, the citizens of Northampton, Granville, and those in northern Edgecombe petitioned the Assembly to move the Superior Court and jail for this district from Enfield to Halifax.<sup>1</sup> Complaints, moreover, were made that Enfield afforded no conveniences for the people attending court at that place. Accommodation and conveyance also were not obtainable at Enfield. The Assembly of the province acted favorably and the court house and prison were accordingly moved to Halifax Town in Halifax County. Trustees were appointed to remove all the records and existing property and to erect the necessary buildings. An appropriation of 134 pounds, 9 shillings, and 4 pence was made and paid over to the trustees to complete the construction of the public buildings. An additional tax was also levied on all taxable persons in the three counties in order to help finance the construction of the buildings.

Edgecombe County made an involuntary surrender of her judicial power in 1758 when Halifax County was formed. Enfield being located in Halifax, consequently it would be impracticable to continue to hold her sessions of court at that place. At this time there was also a commercial rivalry existing between the two counties, and Tarboro was growing as a commercial competitor with Halifax Town. It became necessary, therefore, to find some suitable and convenient place in Edgecombe County to hold court.

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<sup>1</sup> Enfield was hardly a village at this time. It never became incorporated until after the Revolution.



It was probably in 1758 or the year after when the court house for Edgecombe County was permanently moved from Enfield to Redmond's Old Field on Tyrancoca, now known as Cokey Swamp. The building was presumably of logs, chinked here and there with mud and making a very crude structure. It could not have been a very permanent building, for there was no special appropriation made to construct a court house at this place. In fact, there are grave uncertainties that the court house was ever completed. It is known, however, and there is conclusive evidence that the session of court for 1760 was held in the vicinity of Tyrancoca Creek. The report of the grand jury was returned from Redmond's Old Field during this year. The foreman was James Barnes, and among others who served at the first session of this court were John Calhoun, James Braswell, Richard Lewis,<sup>1</sup> and James Hogans. Fortunately, also, there is a record of the court proceedings held at Redmond's Old Field that year. Among the civil cases disposed of was that of a land deal which involved some of Edgecombe's most prominent citizens at that time. The property of John P. Dew was divided by the County Court according to his will. Acting on the special committee, appointed by John Haywood,<sup>2</sup> Aquilla Suggs, and Thomas Hall, Justices of the Peace, to divide the estate among the heirs of John Dew according to law, were James Smith, Drew Smith, and James Hogans. The records indicate also that at this time Elisha Battle, a citizen who afterwards became very prominent in politics and church affairs, repaired to Redmond's Old Field to take an oath as a Justice of the Peace. It is supposed that Mr. Battle presided over the few remaining sessions of court at this place.

It may be inferred from that fact that the court house at Redmond's Old Field was not substantially built, and that the people in the county contemplated another site from the beginning. It is very difficult to reach any definite conclusion as to where the sessions of court were held between 1760 and 1764. There are no reports of any court session during these four years. In the meantime a petition was sent to the General Assembly by the inhabitants of the county that they might be permitted to move the

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<sup>1</sup> Father of Exum Lewis, noted Revolutionary soldier from Edgecombe.

<sup>2</sup> John Haywood was appointed public treasurer in 1756. He was the father of William Haywood, of Edgecombe County, and of Judge John Haywood, who lived in Halifax until his departure for Tennessee.

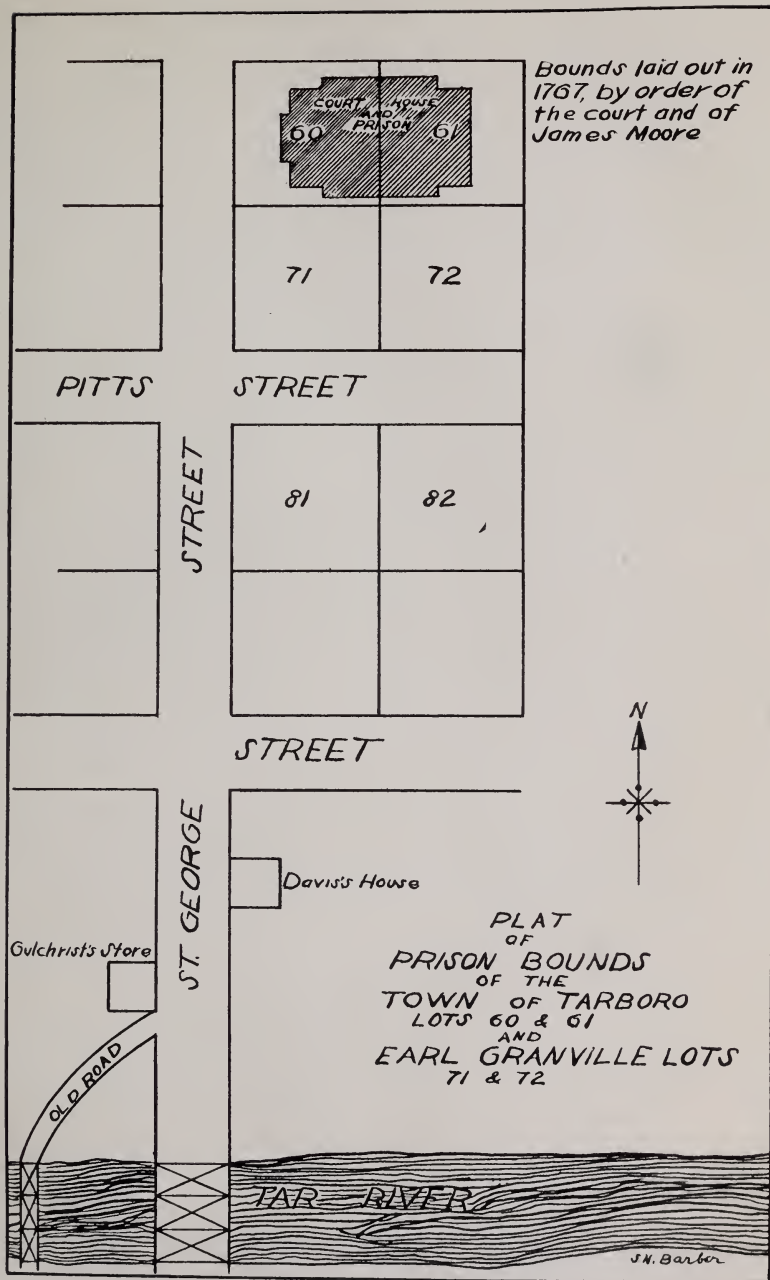
court house from Redmond's Old Field to Tarboro. The reason given for the removal was that the former place was too inconvenient for the people, and that it was impracticable to build a jail near the old court house that would confine criminals. Those committing misdemeanors were frequently let out of prison by assistance from outside parties, and on one occasion the prison was set on fire and destroyed by some disorderly people in that vicinity. At this time the neighborhood of Tyrancoca Swamp was very thinly settled and no protection was offered for the county property. The petition also stated that a court house and prison should not be built at Tyrancoca Swamp, as had been previously planned, for the reason given by the inhabitants. From the indication of the petition one might infer that no court house had been erected at Redmond's Old Field.

The Justices of the peace in the meantime were called upon by the Assembly to substantiate the reasons offered by the people why the court house should go to Tarboro. They accordingly recommended this town as a proper location. In order to impress the Assembly more favorably, another petition was presented to that body by Mr. Palmer in April, 1762. The former reasons were repeated, namely, that Redmond's Old Field was too obscure a place for the court house and prison, and that the people suffered much inconvenience through the lack of accommodation at that place. The bill presented by Mr. Palmer was not acted upon during this session of the General Assembly. In the next election for representatives to the General Assembly he was not returned, and it fell to Mr. Ruffin's lot to agitate the matter and bring it to a conclusion.

Early in 1764 arrangements were made for the construction of the public buildings. The court house could not have been very large, for it was completed in six months, after several interruptions, by William Dunn. The price paid for the work was eight pounds, which also indicates the smallness of the building. Aquilla Suggs, William Haywood, Joseph Howell, Sherwood Haywood, and James Hall were appointed by the Governor and Assembly to supervise the work.<sup>1</sup> There had been no tax prior to this time laid on the inhabitants to build the court house and

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<sup>1</sup> A clerk's office, the first to be built in Edgecombe, was also provided for in this act of Assembly, 1764.





prison for the county. The clerk of the County Court was accordingly ordered to certify the unanimous consent of the court for an act providing for a court house and jail by taxation. According to the wishes of the county officials two shillings were levied on all taxables in the county to be collected by the sheriff for two consecutive years in order to pay the expenses in building the court house and prison. The surplus money was turned over to the county officials to be applied to the contingent charges of the county and to aid the county tax.

During the process of construction of the court house the sessions of court were held in a dwelling in Tarboro. This fact indicates that the old court house at Redmond's Old Field, if one was constructed there in 1758, had been torn down or abandoned because of the inconvenience in holding court in that place. It is reasonable to believe that if one existed at this time at Redmond's Old Field the sessions of court would have been held there during the time the court house in Tarboro was being completed.

The method of conducting the prison and court house in the colonial period presents a very interesting condition. Whether or not the people ruled with a more humane hand then than now many are prone to doubt. It can be said, however, that the prison was kept with much more leniency extended to the prisoner in the colonial times than now. A special provision was made in the plans for Edgecombe's prison for a parcel of land, six acres, to be annexed to the prison for exclusive use of the prisoners. Those who were confined in the prison after 1741 had the privilege of walking out in the open when endangered on account of bad health, provided, however, that those in prison were not charged with treason or felony.

In addition to the local court system and the right of Superior Court trial, the county had also the right of a representation in the General Assembly of North Carolina. Edgecombe, because of her location, was subject to an unhappy and embarrassing situation because of a long dispute over legal representation prior to 1741. When the counties of Bath and Albemarle were erected it was agreed that the precincts of the former should send two members each to the Legislature, while those of the latter were allowed five. The discrimination was due to the differences in population, Bath County being very sparsely settled and Albemarle containing



a majority of the inhabitants. In the course of time, however, there grew to be an unequal representation of the various precincts in the two counties which had reached a climax when Edgecombe was formed in 1732. It followed, therefore, that when Governor Burrington issued a decree for an election for representatives from Edgecombe Precinct, and when Edgecombe elected five members according to the previous agreement of the Assembly that the large and populous counties should enter a vigorous protest. Especially was the question of representation further complicated when Governor Dobbs constituted Halifax County and permitted four representatives to be elected from that district. Dobbs claimed he was trying to bring the southern and northern districts up to equal representation. Lord Granville, being interested in Edgecombe, it being his property at the time, objected strenuously to this action of Governor Dobbs, and claimed that to allow four members from the small county of Halifax and only two from the large county of Edgecombe was unjust.

The agitation became very acute in 1734, when William Whitehead, James Speir, Bar Macquinny, David Hopper, and James Millikin appeared in the Assembly as representatives from Edgecombe. Their entries entitled them to a seat in the Assembly, which although objectionable to the precinct of Bath County brought forth no immediate protest. Before the time for the next election for the ensuing session of the Assembly a law was passed forming a more equal representation and pleasantly avoided a serious controversy.

In the meantime another incident caused Edgecombe County considerable difficulty in securing seats in the Assembly for two representatives provided for by the new law. In 1733, one year after the precinct was formed, Edgecombe sent only two legislators, Captain Will Whitehead and Dr. David Hopper, because of the unsettled political condition. Contrary to the expectations of the precinct and to the humiliation of the representatives, they were refused a seat in the Assembly. Their rejection was the result of the controversy then being waged in the Assembly over the legality of a Governor erecting new precincts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edgecombe was erected by Governor Burrington in 1732; but was not confirmed by the Assembly until 1741.



The following year, however, Captain Whitehead and Dr. Hopper were re-elected and returned to the General Assembly. The controversy being less acute than in the preceding year, the representatives were permitted to take their seats. The unsettled conditions were evident, however, because Edgecombe's representatives were not allowed to take part or vote in the legislative session. The regular number of representatives, except in 1734<sup>1</sup> and 1739,<sup>2</sup> were sent to the Assembly until 1740. During 1740 the situation was very offensive and Edgecombe County intentionally neglected to elect any members for the General Assembly. This served as a good pretext for those who had objected to Edgecombe's having a representation to exclude the county from having a voice in colonial legislation. George Roberts, a representative from Craven County, originally a precinct in Bath County, came out in open opposition and declared Edgecombe's members ought not to be returned. He accordingly introduced a resolution in the Assembly declaring the members from Edgecombe County sat in the house contrary to the privileges of legislation, and moved that they should not be allowed to exercise the function of legislators until a law was passed constituting Edgecombe a legal county. The timely intervention, however, of several influential members avoided the embarrassment and a probable revolution of the Edgecombe citizens.

It is very difficult to understand why Edgecombe should be granted local self-government through their courts and be given power to tax its citizens for specific purposes and then not be permitted to form a part of the provincial government. This much is certain, however, that the county was being used by political factions as a means to further their political ambitions. This fact is demonstrated by the dependency Edgecombe was involuntarily compelled to assume upon Bertie County.<sup>3</sup> Prior to 1740 Bertie and Edgecombe were designated jointly in matters pertaining to the Supreme Court. Jurymen from Edgecombe were listed with those from Bertie, while taxes prior to 1737 were collected with those of this county.

The results of political parleying placed Edgecombe not only in an awkward and unjust position, but hampered the progress

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<sup>1</sup> Five representatives were elected that year.

<sup>2</sup> Four representatives were elected that year.

<sup>3</sup> Edgecombe was cut off from Bertie County.

and development of the county. It was, therefore, a matter of expediency to reach some method of adjusting effectively for Edgecombe the question of representation. To this end in 1743 the county elected John Pope, an influential citizen, as a representative to appear before the Assembly and place before the session an actual account of the state of affairs. He was, however, prevented from accomplishing his original purpose by being permitted to accept a seat in the Assembly.

In the meantime the question of representation was permanently settled when the Crown left the issue with Governor Johnston, who declared in favor of Edgecombe in 1744. Edgecombe accordingly took her place the following year with the other counties in shaping legislation for the Province. Her first appearance under this condition was made when John Alston and John Pope were placed upon important committees to regulate grievances imposed from a lack of military officers to prevent general muster. Two years later, 1746, John Haywood and Joseph Howell, two of the most influential men in the county were appointed to serve on a committee by the Assembly to examine public claims and accounts. Meanwhile Mr. Haywood also acted as chairman of the committee which drew up a bill regulating the practice of the court of justice and another to facilitate navigation in the Province. For several years Mr. Haywood remained on the public claims committee, and acted with credibility. During this time Edgecombe regained much of her lost prestige and became one of the leading political centers of the Province.

The members of the Assembly in Edgecombe were elected by the freemen of the county. As a qualification for a representative a candidate had to be a freeman and possess, in his own right, 100 acres of freehold and be a resident of the precinct for one year. The sheriff<sup>1</sup> issued a writ in obedience to the summons from the Governor for the freeholders of the county to meet at the court house and vote for the candidates. The voting was done openly and orally.<sup>2</sup> The candidates sat on the magistrates' bench in open court, the sheriff down below to oversee the voting to ascertain how every man voted. The candidates were permitted to acknowledge

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<sup>1</sup> John Alston was sheriff during the first election, and the same custom was followed until 1787.

<sup>2</sup> This method was changed later in 1768 to that of voting by signing the name of the voter on a ticket.

the vote of his constituents by a nod, and sometimes words of thanks were spoken to those voting for him. After the election the voters usually met at some ordinary where a feast was held for all at the expense of the successful candidates.

Representative government in many respects corresponded to the old English system. One of the similarities was that of borough representation. Edgecombe's part in borough representation, however, was negative rather than positive. In 1765 Governor Martin visited the town of Tarboro<sup>1</sup> for political reasons. He was given a very cordial and pleasant reception and for this reason was probably influenced to give the town the right of a borough member through the issuing of a charter. The sheriff of the county, at the command of Governor Martin, held an election in 1755, and Henry Irwin was elected. Naturally when Mr. Irwin appeared at the General Assembly to take his seat, various objections were made. There were two material objections that the Assembly offered why Mr. Irwin should not be allowed a seat in the General Assembly. In the first place there was considerable danger that the Governor would be given additional power by being allowed to create boroughs at his will. It is obvious that the Governor by granting new members would be raising up for himself future power over colonial legislation. Members elected by the creation of new boroughs by the Governor would necessarily feel under obligations to him and favor the Governor's plans in the coercion of legislative measures over the Assembly.

The General Assembly observed this and watched with zealous care the increase of Governor Martin's encroachments. The matter was referred to the committee on the privilege of election, where the legality of the case was debated. Many would have been inclined to favor Edgecombe had not the personal matter of curtailing the power of the Governor been under consideration. The point of law, however, entered into the Assembly's investigation and constituted the means whereby Edgecombe's borough representative was ultimately rejected. The law required that town representation should come through a charter which stipulated that each town so represented should have sixty resident families. Tarboro, not having the required number of families, was consequently not in a position to agitate the matter.

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<sup>1</sup> Tarboro was the county seat.

In the meantime, however, Governor Martin was placed in a bad light by the several accusations brought against him by the Assembly. He sought to justify his action by saying Mr. McCulloh, a member of the Council, had presented a petition from the citizens of Edgcombe requesting that Tarboro be permitted a representative according to the Bath town act of 1715. This being the fact in the case, Governor Martin wrote a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth in 1774, declaring the law was violated, and called upon the Crown to support him in his action. Governor Martin also claimed that he had consulted Chief Justice Howard and Mr. Strudwick, a councilor, who had sufficient power to grant a charter under the existing law, and that they had declared his action legal.

The truth of the matter is not definitely known, since the authority for the case came from the report of Governor Martin. No records were entered upon the minutes of the General Assembly. Be that as it may, the controversy was quelled when Governor Martin heard from the Earl of Dartmouth, who informed him that the election law of 1715 evidently disqualified any town to send a representative that did not have the number of freeholders specified. He advised Martin not to enter into a controversy with the Assembly over the rejection of the representative from Tarboro allowed through the charter he had granted.



## CHAPTER III

### REVOLUTION

If the object of history is to describe the movements of people, the most obvious question that arises will naturally be: What force moves the people? In describing a war or a revolution the first thing to seek for is the cause of the event—the force which causes the conflagration—not in the power of any one individual, but in the reciprocal influence on each other of many individuals who took part in the controversy.

The greatest activity of the Americans during the Revolution was directed from localities and the various sections of the various colonies. In the study, therefore, of the causes and part played by individuals, one must begin in the localities where action was displayed. In almost every State, and in the county in each State, while they had many things in common, were actuated by different motives in taking a stand in the struggle of 1775. Nor did all the motives appear spontaneously during the same period.

While the actual cause of the Revolution grew out of conditions and measures affecting more directly the New England colonies, there were also some important forces in operation in other colonies which actuated them in taking a very prominent part in the rebellion. These causes in Edgecombe County began, it might be said, from the time Edgecombe Precinct was erected.<sup>1</sup> This precinct along with all the others was considered a source of revenue to the Proprietors and of the English Crown. Those who occupied the land had to pay so much quit rent <sup>2</sup>—for the use and cultivation of the territory occupied.

Like a great many of the other policies of England during this period there was no regularity or consistency in the execution of the law, and the people were unmolested in their taking up land and cultivating it. The earliest overseer of the quit rents was a Mr. Rutherford, who had married the late Governor's widow. He was somewhat indolent and extravagant in his personal habits and permitted the people to manage affairs to suit themselves. Complaints were directed against him on account of his inac-

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<sup>1</sup> The control of the Colony was at this time (1732)' under the Lords Proprietors.

<sup>2</sup> The significance of the term is not known. For several years the sheriff of the precinct did the collecting and was allowed 5 per cent of all rents collected.



tivity. Quit rents became greatly in arrears with no one to supervise a regular collection for the Lords Proprietors. The arrears from 1732 to 1735 had heavily accumulated. In 1735 over 400,000 acres of land were held by only 67 men who were not owners of the land in fee simple. Of the 67 tenants the entire amount of quit rent paid for the privilege of using the land for two and one-half to five years was only a few hundred pence. When one considers the amount that should have been collected according to law, it is calculated a deficit of several hundred pounds. Finally, Mr. Rutherford lost his position, but not until matters had drifted into a deplorable state of affairs.

The result from failure to collect the quit rents, especially in Edgcombe, which at this time was one of the most thickly settled sections of the Province, was that government officials—judges, councilmen, and Governor—were behind in their salaries.<sup>1</sup> George Nicholas,<sup>2</sup> one of the resident judges in the district of Edgcombe wrote Governor Dobbs in 1755 that his salary of 20 pounds was always in arrears, and the same could not be paid until the quit rents were collected. He also complained that the circuit of Edgcombe compelled him to ride two hundred miles twice a year before he could secure his salary, which was payable out of the quit rent money.

Naturally, when the Governor's salary depended on the collection of rents, the officials sought to execute the measures which would guarantee them their pay. The controversy began with Governor Burrington, but reached no permanent head because of his limited stay in the Province. Governor Johnston, his successor, began the rent quarrel immediately after his arrival. New measures were enacted, the number of places for collecting the rents were diminished, the inhabitants were treated as tenants of the Crown, and revenues were to be paid in specie instead of in kind as was the former method.

In the meantime many of the inhabitants had purchased and owned lands in fee simple. Consequently, those who were not so fortunate were grievously handicapped by being subject to the arbitrary treatment of the agents. The tenants refused to pay

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<sup>1</sup> Officials were paid with quit rent money.

<sup>2</sup> Judge Nicholas was allowed £20 annually as Circuit Court judge for Edgcombe.

North Carolina.

RECEIVED, the *Thirtieth* Day of *June* 1735 of  
*Abraham Herrick*

the Sum of *four pounds seven shillings & six pence*  
being for the *half of Five* Year's Quit-Rent, due to the Crown,  
the Twenty Ninth Day of September last, for *Two hundred & fifty*

Acres of Land, holden by *Abraham Herrick*

and situate in *Beckie Precinct*

in *Albemarle County*

I say received, for the Use of his Majesty,

Per

*Thos. Allen,*  
*Act. Genl.*

Commissioners of *Sarborough*

1791

July 2nd

To *Charles Gerrard Esq*  
Do plank and Timber *ad. L. O'Brien*  
for repairing the *Shed* 20/- {1-11-0

1793

To Cash paid the *Salute* of *Edgewood*  
Court for an acre of ground on the  
commons to *loan* my mill to which  
money was to have been allowed  
for the acre I gave up at the lower  
mill Seat - 5-11-0

*Charles Gerrard*



their rents unless provided with more convenient places, and, according to their interpretation, convenient places were the neighborhood in which the rents accrued. They also requested that rents should be collected in kind at a fixed price.

The result of this conflict of opinion between the officials and the people led to a rebellion in 1735. The people refused to pay their rents until overtures were made by the authorities and the officials changed their attitude. It is not an easy matter to say just how far the trouble would have extended if it had not been for a change of policy on the part of the Crown.

For sometime it had been a matter of serious consideration as to whether or not the Crown should take over the colony. In 1729 the question was decided affirmatively. Although this settled the quit rent trouble temporarily in Edgecombe, it caused a more serious economic one to the settlers by the transfer of the land from the Proprietors to the Crown. It ultimately led, as will be seen, to numerous uprisings and open hostilities to the Crown's authority.

When the Earl of Granville consented, with the other Lords Proprietors in 1729, to surrender to the Crown the sovereignty of the Province of North Carolina, he reserved to himself all the rights of ownership to one-eighth part of the Province. The area of Edgecombe at this time included all of the Granville district. This fact resulted in many hardships on those residing in his territory. Naturally, Granville would create more drastic measures and use more compulsion in the collection of rents than had been done. Since it was his main source of revenue, he decreed that all rents must be paid in gold or silver, and refused commodities. Moreover, the rents were to be paid at Outlaw's Landing on Chowan River, about 90 miles from the nearest boundary of Edgecombe and 300 miles from the frontier.<sup>1</sup> This caused a hardship on the people, who every year had to make the journey without wagon trails, through forests infested with Indians and dangerous beasts. There were also other difficulties, for there was very little specie in the colony at this time, and this law naturally kept the Province entirely drained of gold or silver. Moreover, instead of having a resident among them to collect the rents,

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<sup>1</sup> The inhabitants were allowed 10 per cent of the amount paid for rents whenever they carried same to the regular place for collection—Edenton or Outlaw Landing.

as was the case during the proprietary period, agents from England were sent over by Granville to take charge of his lands.

In addition to this a gross unfairness to the inhabitants came about through a controversy between Granville and the Crown. It was Granville's policy to rent land to various tenants, charging them a fee for issuing the land grant, and then a quit rent for the privilege of using the land for cultivation. The consequences were that an immense revenue from Edgecombe County, instead of going into the King's treasury, went into the private funds of the Earl of Granville. This constituted a serious loss to the Crown, and an increased burden on the people, since it caused the Crown's officials to impose additional fees and taxes upon them in order to compensate the officials for their services in the Province.

In a short time Granville's district was looked upon as a separate part of the Province, and a warm jealousy grew up between this section and the King's domain in the matter of colonial representation. This friction was not satisfactorily adjusted until the opening of hostilities in 1775.

In the meantime additional trouble arose over Earl Granville's neglect of his North Carolina possessions. Instead of supervising his estate personally and providing against grievances, which necessarily arose, he placed agents, many of whom were unfit for the position over the people. These agents by unscrupulous means carried on extortions until it became unbearable. These agents, especially Francis Corbin and Bradley, in their practices of fraud induced several persons to make entries for the same piece of land, charging each a fee. In 1752 Corbin and Thomas Childs increased their intolerable oppression by declaring patents void, which had been issued by their predecessors, in order to collect more fees. When the fraud was detected the agents refused to return the money. In this manner huge sums were collected and appropriated by the agents. Moreover, exorbitant fees were charged extra in all land grants for Granville's lands; the amounts above which they were required to turn over to the Earl of Granville were retained by these agents. It has been estimated that in collecting the taxes imposed for revenue to meet the expenses of the Indian Wars and the fees imposed by the various agents amounted to \$10 on each head of a family in the Granville district.



In 1759 the Earl of Granville further showed his indifference to the people's grievances, and the welfare of his territory, by turning his lands over to Thomas Childs and Francis Corbin.<sup>1</sup> Childs was made auditor and exercised much influence over Lord Granville himself. The fraud by which these men were to grow very rich in a short time was disclosed in a letter during this period.

Mr. Childs was to return to England, leaving his position in charge of Colonel Innes on the Cape Fear during his absence. In his visit to England he was to represent the conditions of the colonists in Granville's district to the Earl, while Corbin was to act upon the information sent him as to the movements in the fraudulent scheme. In the meantime, Innes was to be a go-between, being kept ignorant of the intrigue, and receiving an annual salary for journeying to Edenton at stipulated times to receive fees, fines, and to issue deeds for lands imposed by Corbin.

While in England Childs worked his scheme well, having issued in his own name a notice in which he delegated specified power to himself as auditor and representative of Earl Granville in the Granville district. He succeeded in acquiring much esteem and favor from Lord Granville by informing the Earl that the agents had collected considerable money, and that Lord Granville took all the fees himself and granted only fixed salaries for his agents. Childs did this in order to show that the profits of the agents were lessened and that Colonel Innes (in office without Lord Granville's knowledge and at the instigation of Childs) would not pay him, Childs, the agent's regular allowance. Thus Childs candidly admitted to Earl Granville that he was under the necessity of stopping the money remitted to the Earl in order to pay himself. The design worked effectively as Childs had planned and justified him and his colleague Corbin in their robberies, in the estimation of Lord Granville. Colonel Innes, innocent though he was, bore the brunt of the blame.

In the course of the swindle and hypocrisy, Lord Granville in his complete ignorance and stupidity, authorized Childs to turn out Innes. This was accordingly done, and a Mr. Wheatly was appointed in his place, the requirements for the position was a

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<sup>1</sup> Corbin was a member of the Governor's Council during Dobbs' administration, and Childs served as Attorney General.

bond of £1000, and Childs was instructed by Lord Granville to force Corbin to sign bonds to Lord Granville to execute his trust. Childs was furthermore instructed to send over a list or schedule of fees which were to be posted in the district, in order that the people might know the amount they were required to pay as rents and land grants. Childs, however, in his adroit and cunning manner arranged with Corbin to get the bond and to keep it without its being properly signed and filed. The list of fees were never sent, nor were remittances of any importance made to Lord Granville. Childs continued his defalcations by making it appear that the fault was with the men he had appointed, thus clearing Corbin, who was his secret agent and growing richer with him at the expense of the inhabitants.

Mr. Wheatly was accordingly turned out as had been his predecessor, Colonel Innes. Mr. Childs immediately transferred the bogus bond to Mr. Bodeley, another agent, after making about £2,000 by charging this agent a premium for the place. Mr. Bodeley became an accomplice in the machinations of Childs and Corbin. He was instructed by Childs to call Corbin to a strict accountability. At the same time he directed Corbin not to account with Bodeley until he returned to the colony from England.

Childs straightway began a movement to return to the gold mine he had laid and to reap some of the rewards of his ignoble scheme. He instructed Corbin to exert his influence as far as possible to create a party against the Governor and his admirers. Corbin was also to create a division among the agents so that Lord Granville would be under the necessity of sending him to the colony to adjust his affairs.

There could be but one result from this secret and dishonest diplomacy. The suffering of the people caused by this corruption checked the final execution of the well-laid plots. The colonists complained and groaned under the oppression of wicked and designing men until relief could be had only by violent resistance.

In order to check the injustice of the agents and to obtain redress, requests were addressed to Earl Granville by the inhabitants of Edgcombe. This effort proved futile, however, since Granville was too much engrossed with his personal matters, and the colonial legislature was unable to take action in the matter because the Earl's possessions were beyond its jurisdiction.

The trouble drifted into an intolerable condition; the people became desperate. The Attorney General was applied to for information in 1758. They demanded advice as to the best course to pursue. The Attorney General suggested that a petition be sent to either the Earl Granville or the legislature to consider their grievances. It was not advisable to send another petition to Granville, since he ignored the first one, and on November 25, 1758, the inhabitants presented a petition to the Colonial Assembly through William Williams, the representative from Edgecombe County. A special committee was appointed to inquire into the action of the Granville agents. Witnesses were summoned and examined, and a detailed report was submitted to the Assembly showing that true complaints had been lodged against the agents. No action, however, was or could be taken by the legislature, but Corbin was forced, more through fear than by the law, to present his books and accounts for public inspection.

The agitation abated temporarily, the quit rent trouble assumed a less violent form, and redress was looked forward to by the outraged citizens. The abatement did not last, however, for the grievances were reopened when resentment became less apparent. Corbin had in the meantime assumed the role of chief, and was growing fat upon the extortions of his subordinates. It is probable that he sought to elude the people by playing second fiddle, thereby preventing the impression of his responsibility. Corbin at this time was a man of considerable political influence. In addition to being chief representative for Earl Granville, he was a member of the General Assembly. In 1756 he was playing a most active part in colonial legislation.

The people, however, realized that Corbin was the direct cause of the renewal of their oppression, and took drastic measures against him when it became evident that no assistance would be offered by the Colonial Assembly. In January, 1759, a considerable number of people from Edgecombe went to Corbin's home near Edenton, seized him during the night and carried him to Enfield, where the agent had an office at the time. He was forced to give a heavy bond for his appearance at the spring term of the Superior Court, and to refund all unjust fees taken from the people. In order to check the timely but unpleasant uprising Corbin signed an article in which he agreed with the inhabitants

to refund to every person the monies he had taken from them through his deputies. He further agreed to remove any deputy surveyor against whom objections were made, and to appoint only one person of good character in the county to take entries and to survey lands. The people were also permitted to examine the entry books and to appoint committees to adjust the claims to lands where two or more made a settlement on the same territory. In the meantime Bodeley, Corbin's principal subordinate, had also been captured and was required to submit to the same procedure as his superior.<sup>1</sup>

The feeling against Corbin subsided, but against those of his subordinates, who were not required to give bond, became more acute. The people's feelings were so worked up that almost unpardonable actions are charged to them. During the time Corbin was in the custody of the people a Mr. Haywood, one of his subordinates, returned home from Virginia, where he had fled, and he died suddenly. The inhabitants, thinking this was a rumor spread abroad to lead them from the pursuit, went to his grave and dug up his remains to see if the report was true.

The government officials, in the meantime, through their consideration for, and moral support to the Granville agents, set the inhabitants of Edgecombe against them. Robert Jones, the Attorney General, lost his influence over the people by reason of his unjust treatment of their case, and considerable odium was expressed against him. The people had given Mr. Jones a fee to appear for them in court and to present their petition to the General Assembly. In the meantime it was reported that Corbin had offered him a larger fee not to carry out his contract and to appear for him. The rumor gained credence and the people vowed not to let him appear in the General Assembly nor to plead in the local courts. It is not known whether the charges against Jones were true or not. The people, however, prepared to avenge themselves when he appeared in the district to attend court.

The extreme severity of the trouble was shown in a memorial addressed by the General Assembly to the Governor in May, 1759. The summary of the address was to the effect that several people within Lord Granville's district had conspired to do personal injury to the officials. A request was made also to quell

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<sup>1</sup> This uprising is known as the Enfield Riot in North Carolina history.



the rioters and to restore order in the county. A reward of £25 was also offered for any detection of those who caused the trouble, and upon conviction an additional fee would be paid.

Governor Dobbs, however, was reluctant in giving the required help to quell the rebellion. In the first place, he was very well satisfied to let the trouble continue, since it would give him a pretext to raise an issue of Granville's inability to oversee his possessions. This was one of the main policies of the Governor, who was striving to bring Edgecombe under the control of the Crown. Perhaps if it had not been for the action of Reverend Mr. Moir, the parish clergyman, Governor Dobbs would have remained silent in the matter. Previous to this episode Governor Dobbs and Mr. Moir had carried on a bitter controversy over the parish court system in the county; consequently, when the latter addressed a letter to the Secretary at London describing the situation, claiming that Corbin acted unjustly, Dobbs was obliged to come into the fray, although it was contrary to his interest. Mr. Moir, Dobbs stated, in order to create more feeling against Corbin, obtained a committee to report to the General Assembly on the conditions; but his efforts proved ineffectual, and that Corbin publicly backed the collector in the county.

The controversy between Dobbs and Moir had the effect in a slight degree which the former had hoped for in the beginning, that the disputes and riots which grew out of the rent quarrel gave him ample pretensions to object to this part of the Province being retained by private ownership.

Dobbs, however, was duty bound to offer some objection to the lawlessness of the people, and accordingly issued a proclamation causing some of the rioters to be arrested. Certain leaders or supposed leaders were arrested and put in jail at Enfield, but were immediately released by their comrades. Corbin himself led the matter of prosecution, but was later warned by Childs, who had secretly guided the entire affair, that if he pursued this action too far he would be the one to suffer, since he had done many deeds which he could not justify. Childs, after having led his partner into crime, did not support him further.

Although the Governor was a friend of the rioters, still believing in the hope that the people would continue their rebellious attitude, the Assembly being the avowed enemy of the citizens.



Pressure, therefore, was brought upon Dobbs, and he was compelled to continue an open effort to suppress the rebellion, at the same time giving a secret support to the people's opposition to the government. Many of the people did not understand his position and thus in their misconception became opposed to the Governor.

This apparent stand of the Governor caused feeling to run high against English rule. Moreover, at this time action was taken to prevent freedom of speech and liberty of the press. The people were not allowed to write letters and pamphlets to agitate relief for their grievances. In 1764 Lewis Griffin was arrested and tried for speaking against the King, but by reason of the sympathies of the people, who shared his opinions, was not convicted. One of the witnesses, William Bakerman, during the trial against Griffin, swore that the prisoner was engaged in a quarrel with one of the citizens, and that Will O'Quinn, a constable, commanded him to keep the King's peace, and that Griffin replied, "God damn the King's peace, and you, too."

Early in 1766 a letter was written in Tarboro and addressed to the Wilmington paper in which the actual conditions and the grievances of the county were clearly stated. The general tone of the letter and its statement created considerable uneasiness among the officials and a movement was started to suppress the information. Threats were made against the parties in Wilmington who had published the letter as a public document. The effect of this was instantaneous, for the people were then deprived of the only means of making their grievances known.

The change of feeling in Edgecombe was natural, due to the progress of the economic trouble and the attitude of the officials toward their demand for redress of their grievances. Although the Governor represented the King in the colony, and was the bitter enemy of the people in Edgecombe, he became secretly a friend for personal ends and was forced to take a stand against them. It was, therefore, well nigh impossible that these people could progress, work out an economic policy, without political and civil liberty. Their domestic life and economic salvation conflicted with the policy and development of government as proposed by the laws of England. Progress generally cost a struggle. The first phase of the struggle in Edgecombe was an opposition

by the individual to the agent of Granville. The second phase was the opposition of the people to the British Governor. The self-assertive interests and impulses were ever present in these pastoral and agricultural people, but these qualities were largely undeveloped because they had not had enough stimulus to excite their activity prior to the beginning of the Revolution.

The condition of Edgecombe County was that of an individual maintaining his personal rights, opinions, and interest against national authority, interests, and oppression. In this condition action became voluntary, and it was for this reason that the citizens of Edgecombe took part in the Revolution. The old restraints were disregarded, and the citizens cast their lot for better or for worse.

In all revolutions there are two parties—the radicals and the conservatives. From the first there were some in the county who were against armed opposition to the King of England. Almost everyone, however, was in favor of taking some method to redress the people's grievances. The moderates remained so throughout the struggle from '75 to '82. There were two types of the conservative element which played no inconspicuous part in the Revolution.

In the meantime the entire colony was in a state of general unrest and uprisings. In the western counties the war of regulation was having its greatest effect upon the minds of the people. The reaction of the western trouble and the spirit exercised by the officials was instrumental in creating a general and continuous upheaval of the people in Granville's district. While the controversy was going on in Orange County between Colonel Fanning and the inhabitants over rents and extravagant fees, Edgecombe was given a new spirit of rebellion and internal revolution. New fuel was added to the flames, which were already blazing high, and the rise of the insurgents in central North Carolina prompted the inhabitants to begin a more staunch opposition.

The day that the Superior Court ended its session for Edgecombe district thirty men from the county (while the Assembly was in session) went to Halifax to rescue one Oneal, an insurgent from Edgecombe County, who had been put in prison for refusing to pay the fees imposed upon him. Oneal had been transferred to the Halifax jail for safe keeping. The party, in their attempt to

rescue their fellow-citizen, were repulsed by some armed citizens and a few troops who were stationed there. One of the party was shot and taken prisoner, another had his horse killed, and several suffered minor wounds.

The officials of the Crown were temporarily successful in checking the riot, but conditions remained bad for the payment of taxes and the resumption of good government. Attempts were made in the county to overcome the officials who persisted in what the people termed "impartial discrimination in their rights." Discontent became more apparent as the grievances of the people grew more burdensome. Laws were generally disobeyed; the jails were weak and badly kept, and the constables were frequently the friends of the people. Consequently no adequate means were available for retaining and punishing those who resisted the power of the Crown's officials.

In the meantime the notice of the Stamp Act issued by the Parliament of England was received in the county. Many who were at variance with the rioters became a champion of their cause. Open remonstrances were made against the legality of the act of Great Britain. The stamp master in Edgecombe was forced to take an oath at the court house not to have anything to do with stamps. The uprisings in other parts of the colony gave the local citizens an incentive for more opposition. The agitation reached a climax, the struggle was on, the flames were bursting everywhere with no restraint to be offered. The Stamp Act excitement was well under way when Governor Tryon came to the colony to succeed Dobbs, who died March 28, 1765. The rebellion against the Stamp Act added much fuel to the flames. Edgecombe was, of all the counties, most adequately prepared to offer opposition and rebellion to the measures of Great Britain. However, singular it may appear that the interior counties should maintain a staunch opposition against the revenue bill, it is nevertheless certain that such was the general attitude. Chief Justice Hasell made a tour of the interior counties immediately after the act was passed by Parliament, and reported to the Governor that among all the inhabitants of the interior and border counties, he did not find one who supported the measure. That this was the state of affairs is indeed remarkable, for there were no restraints on trade and commerce to arouse the anger of the people as there was on the

Cape Fear. The most probable explanation of the bitter and timely rejection of the right of England to enforce the law, was the background of the whole period in which the people had to be subject to unlawful means of taxation.

In March, 1765, a protest was lodged against the proceedings of Parliament, and the Sons of Liberty, an organization formed on the Cape Fear for opposing the Stamp Act, was organized in Edgecombe. Immediately after the organization was formed the Clerk of the County Court was forced to swear that he would not receive any stamped paper or distribute any stamps in the county. The foundation was fast being laid upon which the citizens were to stand nine years later. The spirit of rebellion was fast culminating in an aggressive action which was destined not to be settled until the close of the year 1783.

Early conditions show conclusively that resistance, which had then reached the point of a common cause, was due to oppression, and it was this alone which moved all the agitation. It is clearly demonstrated that where force was resorted to grievances had been prolonged by the agents and mercenaries of England, who had not considered the welfare of their dependents. The records show also that when the occasion required, the citizens of Edgecombe were not slow in using violence to redress their wrongs. In the difficulties which had already taken place—rent troubles, legislative discriminations, riots, and heavy taxations—they exercised patience and forbearance. However, in all of the differences which caused the conflicts the people were fully prepared to realize the nature of their unrest, and to resist the encroachments of Great Britain.

It is clear at this time that the people were considering organized resistance to the procedure of the British Government. John Haywood, the colonel and commissioner in charge of the military affairs in Edgecombe, was requested to make a return of all forces under his command. In April, 1765, Colonel Haywood accordingly reported that he had 14 companies with 1,317 men, including officers, ready for military duty. At this time preparations were under way. There were no arms at this time in the county, and shortly afterwards considerable stores were sent to Tarboro for use. There were no Indians in the county, and no suspected uprisings against the State than have been already mentioned.



After Colonel Haywood's report a new muster was made, and 200 more men were added, the companies were increased and more equally divided.

It became apparent in 1774 that general opposition was going to be made, especially in North Carolina. The conflict between the Governor and the General Assembly gave rise to a new spirit. The rebellious attitude of the colonists everywhere showed plainly the uselessness of further attempts at a peaceful understanding. In the spring of 1774 John Harvey, speaker of the Assembly, issued circulars, headed by his name, in every county for the election of Representatives to the First Provincial Congress to be held, August 25th, in Newbern. A most singular thing in Edgecombe's history happened when the county failed to elect delegates to form the first Revolutionary Congress in North Carolina. The fear of openly opposing Great Britain was so great that placidity exceeded the fervor which moved the people in 1758 and 1760. In the meantime, however, internal conditions created a radical change in the country, and the minds of the people were disturbed in a different way the following year.

The first convention proposed the foundations upon which the new government in North Carolina was to be based. A committee of five was elected for each county to execute the orders of the Congress, and to act as a committee of correspondence. Although Edgecombe had failed to send representatives to the Congress, it was not ignored in the propaganda for the new cause. Elisha Battle, William Haywood, Duncan Lemon, Henry Irwin, and Nathaniel Boddie were elected as the Edgecombe committee to discharge the duties imposed by the Congress. During the fall of 1774 the local committee convened the freeholders in Edgecombe, and a committee of safety was appointed, with Elisha Battle as its head. He was selected as one of the committee to propose certain rules and regulations for the government of the local people. E. Gray, from Edgecombe, was also appointed district committeeman on the committee of privileges and elections.

The following year many changes were made in the preparation for war in the county. Edgecombe, casting off her shame of the previous year, sent five representatives, William Haywood, Elisha Battle, Duncan Lemon, Henry Irwin, and Nathaniel Boddie, to the Provincial Congress.



In the meantime Josiah Martin appeared in the colony as Governor to succeed Tryon, who had gone to New York. In 1772 he became very anxious to reform the colony, and in order to do so he looked suspiciously upon Edgewcombe, the seat of unrest and insurrection, as the principal place to start. He wisely set about to formulate a method (unlike Governor Dobbs') to purchase Lord Granville's right to the territory under a legal bill of sale. It happened at the time that the lands were for sale at a price of 70,000 pounds. As a purely commercial transaction the purchase would have been a profitable one. In 1766 the quit rents amounted to over 6,000 pounds proclamation money, and with the reopening of the land office which had been closed for five years (1766-1772), and adjustment of the unhappy and deplorable conditions, causing those who had settled upon the land during the five years the land office was closed to pay the required fee, the yield of revenue would have been lucrative indeed. It was estimated by Governor Martin at the time that the amount would early reach 12,000 pounds. It is not, however, to be presumed that conditions would have been made any better by the transfer of the territory to the Crown.

Two notable occurrences prevented Governor Martin from effecting his design. In the first place, the laxity of the agents in collecting the rents, and the refusal of the inhabitants to yield any further monies until their grievances were redressed, made it practically impossible to hope for any co-operation on the part of those who occupied the land. In the second place, a large number of settlers and land squatters had occupied unsettled lands when the land office was closed, and the administration was in a chaotic condition. Naturally they claimed all rights to the land which was so easily possessed, and they also naturally resented the payment of rents.

Strange to say, although it may seem contradictory, for these reasons Governor Martin, supported by the Assembly, urged the King to purchase the Granville territory. The fact that the conditions in the county were such as described, caused considerable discussion and debate as to the advisability of purchasing the lands. The matter was deferred because of the deliberations. When the policy of Martin was being considered in England, affairs in the Granville district grew worse. In 1773 Earl Gran-

ville by some unaccountable means finally awoke to the actual conditions which existed, and for the first time sought to effect an adjustment. He proposed to make Governor Martin his chief agent, hoping thereby to restore his source of revenue and to effect a harmonious feeling among the people. Governor Martin submitted the matter to Lord Hillsboro in order to receive permission to execute this office along with his other duties. Before a decision could be reached another stage was set for a historical change. Meanwhile forces were operating which decided the question for all concerned. That this policy affected the American colonies as a whole, overshadowed the purely local conditions, and Great Britain found herself involved in a war with her children across the sea. The questions for which the people had constantly and consistently labored were to be decided by a general uprising and armed resistance, not only to the agents of the English who lorded it over them, but to the central head of the English Government as well.

Many conservatives held a decided view in favor of the colonists, and others—the royalists—were partial to the authority of Great Britain. In the first group were many men like Elisha Battle, Jonathan Thomas, William Horn, John Thomas, Willie O'Brien, and others. These men fought in the Revolution, but were not so enthusiastic over the open breach with so great a power as England was at that time. Acting in a religious capacity, these men wrote a letter to Governor Martin in 1772 commending him on his policies and his attributing to the people a desire for a sound religious and civil liberty. The influence of such prominent men upon the feverish spirit of the people cannot be overestimated. Cool, level-headed though these men were, it took only a few months to convince them of their error and to convert them to the Revolutionary cause. After all was done that was left for them to do, they acquiesced and assumed their share of the burden for political independence.

The second type of conservatives, however, were more to be considered. They were as enthusiastic on one side as the colonists were on the other. Indeed, the principal trouble that local colonists had to contend with grew out of the conflict with the loyalists. The internal struggle began early in 1775, when the whole American continent was ablaze with momentous agitations

and reprisals. Joshua Bertley, a Tory with no little celebrity, deserted the common cause of the people, and endeavored to inflame their minds against the American measures of liberty. He succeeded in unifying several followers, who created a political antagonism to the policies of the Revolutionists. Bertley was arrested by the aid of the militia, and was tried for the charge. Sometime between midnight and day the agitator paid the penalty for his loyalty to England. He left, however, several ardent friends who advocated his principles to a conclusion as will hereafter be observed. Among the Episcopalians, especially the wealthier and older planters, the Loyalists predominated. These men, although antagonistic to the citizens at that time, can now be looked upon with more consideration. They were brave and honest men, who were in all probability proud of their views, enjoyed a free empire to which they belonged, and who had no immediate desire to shirk the burden of maintaining it. The majority from Edgcombe ended their declining days, after having had their goods and property confiscated, in poverty and exile. History has not carefully recorded their memory, because they represented a defeated cause. But it can be recognized now that they were among some of the best and ablest men in the county, and that they contended for a principle as sacred to them as that for which the greater number fought. Perhaps, also, the Loyalists remained passive for a long time during the early period of the Revolution, because they thought the people who took up arms had no idea of independence. They were merely attempting to redress their grievances and not to form a permanent separation from the English Government.

The Revolution having begun in earnest, it became necessary to take a military inventory. When the trouble began in 1775 there were approximately 2,000 taxables in the county of military age. Measures were soon inaugurated to gather together all available forces to prevent Loyalists uprising, and to repel any possible invasion. The movement which undertook this task was the Council of Safety, with Elisha Battle as its head. Men of military experience were very scarce, although all were good hunters and expert riflemen. Although military tactics were practically unknown, several of the citizens had seen service in the Indian wars. Several military officers held commissions in

the county, having been appointed many years before the possibilities of war were ever considered. Alexander McCullogh was appointed colonel of Edgecombe militia when Dobbs came to North Carolina in 1764. William Barnes was made a captain in 1757, William Haywood colonel of the regiment of Edgecombe in 1761, and Jacob Whitehead lieutenant-colonel at the same time. These men, however, were incapable of active service, and were, to a considerable degree, inefficient because of old age and lack of proper training. The Council of Safety, therefore, began its recruiting under very adverse conditions.

The first provision made by North Carolina toward utilizing military force for the Revolution was to organize minute men and militia. Edgecombe, according to her population and area, was required to raise two companies of 50 men each of minute men to serve for six months. They were not required to re-enlist after this term expired. The battle of Moore's Creek was the time for mustering out.

In addition to two companies of minute men, Edgecombe was also to assist in raising a brigade of militia. The militia was made up of men from 16 to 60 years of age.

In the meantime the Second Provincial Congress was called, and an election was held in the county to select members from Edgecombe. Accordingly, in August, 1775, Robert Bignal, Henry Irwin, Duncan Lemon, Thomas Hunter, and Thomas Harmonson Hall were elected. In April, 1776, William Haywood, Elisha Battle, and Nathaniel Boddie were also elected. These men presented to the Congress a true state of affairs in Edgecombe, and requested that action be taken to make the military situation suitable for defense of the county. In September, 1775, Congress immediately appointed field officers for the minute men in Edgecombe County. William Haywood was made colonel, Sherwood Haywood lieutenant-colonel, Joseph Moore first major, and Henry Horn second major. In June, 1776, Congress appointed Gresham Coffield captain, Spenser Watts lieutenant, and Francis Parker ensign to co-operate with Mr. Battle in military activities in the county. These men formed the first battalion and acted as its officers as designated above.

In 1767 Catawba camp had been established on Fishing Creek for military headquarters for eastern North Carolina. This was

The Members for the County of Edgcombe  
Recommend, John Nicholson Lieut. Colt, and  
Theophilus Thomas, first Maj.<sup>r</sup> to the Edgcombe  
Reg<sup>t</sup> of Militia, this 3<sup>rd</sup> Janry 1787.

Elisha Battle

Ethelred Philips

THIS RECOMMENDATION AGREED TO 4TH JANUARY, 1787, IN HOUSE OF  
COMMONS BY ORDER OF JOHN B. ASHE





done as a precaution against possible Indian troubles, which had not in the past been infrequent. In June of that year the Governor, accompanied by various military officers under the command of Alexander Moses, of Edgecombe, visited the various Indian tribes and met here to report. This camp had been partially kept in a state of repair and promised to be useful as well as a convenient place for mobilization of troops.

Under the regularly instituted military organization in the county field officers were elected, and commissions were issued by the Provincial Congress. Subordinate officers were elected by the county commissioners. The Council of Safety exercised the authority of calling out the militia in an emergency when the Congress was not in session. The first field officers of the Regular or Grand Army—Colonel William Haywood, Lieutenant Colonel Sherwood Haywood, Major James Moore, and Second Major Henry Horne—were elected in 1775. In 1776 the militia system was reorganized because of the inactivity of the officers. Edgecombe's list was changed completely. Exum Lewis succeeded William Haywood as colonel; Simon Gray became lieutenant-colonel; Jonas Johnson major, and Thomas Hunter second major. At the same time the Continental regiments were organized in North Carolina, and James Blount and Henry I. Toole were elected captains in the Second Regiment. After the discharge of this regiment, Captain Toole was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the Fifth Regiment.

The organization of troops began with much enthusiasm, and officers were immediately appointed to take command of the various companies. In the meantime, William Williams was made adjutant in the spring of 1776 by Congress. He was requested to send 400 weights of shot to Colonel Irwin in Tarboro for defense and use by Edgecombe's militia. Large quantities of provisions were collected also at Tarboro for the use of the army under Colonel Irwin. Much of these provisions were sent to Wilmington to ration Edgecombe troops, who were there at that time defending the town from the Loyalists and the British. On November 28, 1776, Green Bell was appointed captain by Congress, John Bryant, Jr., lieutenant, and Theophilus Coleman second lieutenant. From these officers and men in Edgecombe the

Halifax Brigade was organized in 1776. The captain of the brigade was James Gray, James Brown acted as lieutenant, and Joseph Creel as ensign.

Several men from Edgcombe acquired fame for their military services during the struggle in behalf of the American cause. Among these were Henry Irwin Toole. He was among the first to accept a commission in the regular army.<sup>1</sup> He took charge of a company and marched to Virginia to defend that State against the British at the beginning of the Revolution. This illustrious patriot took part in the battle near Norfolk, and later won laurels for his name in the struggle at Brandywine. When the company which he commanded had served its time of enlistment and was disbanded, Captain Toole returned to Tarboro, where he resumed his profession as a merchant. He lived to represent his county in the Provincial Congress and to see the happy termination of the cause for which he fought.

Prior to 1780 no fighting with the British occurred in the county, but the citizens took a conspicuous part in accomplishing a successful military campaign. Perhaps the most notable, or at least one among the most prominent characters who supported the Revolutionary cause in the county, was Colonel Jonas Johnson. An industrious farmer, without the rudiments of learning, he proved to be a patriot with zeal and power. He took command of a regiment in 1776, and fought against the Tories at Moore's Creek. After engaging in several encounters, he returned home and became a delegate to the Provincial Convention until 1779. This year marked the beginning of his career as a military leader. He assumed command of a regiment and went to South Carolina to defend that State against the British in 1780-81. Later he returned to his native State and engaged the Tories and British under Tarleton at the battles of Slone and Guilford Court House.

Just as the county was making extensive preparation for the struggle, an incident occurred which excited deep resentment in the minds of the people. Governor Martin, just before his flight from the colony, issued a proclamation by which freedom was

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Toole was also among the first members of the Assembly that met without the sanction of royal authority and in open opposition to the Crown.

offered to all slaves who took up arms against their masters. Before any damage could be done, however, the armed and organized militia calmed the dissatisfied slaves and restored order among them.

In the meantime the Loyalist activity began in earnest, and promised considerable trouble for those who opposed Great Britain. Early in 1776 an attempt was made to raise a Loyalist force in the county. The Loyalists, however, were without the means of securing sufficient arms and organization, and before they could muster together a force, the troops in the county succeeded in defeating them and arresting the leaders of the movement.

Another attempted uprising occurred late in the winter of 1776, when the disgruntled and disaffected element in the county gave signs of Toryism. There were many malcontents concerned, and various efforts were made to inflame the minds of the people against the action of the Continental Congress. The matter was of much importance since the success of the military forces depended on the support it gained from Congress and the sentiments of the people behind this legislative body. Colonel Sheppard issued a notice for the militia to arrest the instigators and to suppress the anti-American feeling. Colonel Jonas Johnson rallied a few raw militiamen and by his bravery and pronounced leadership dispersed the band of Tories and restored order in the county.

In addition to noble and brave leaders, Edgecombe sent many troops to support the common cause. In 1777 the Scots were driven out of the county, while the Loyalists were completely under subjection. This enabled the Edgecombe troops to leave the county to defend other sections of the country. Some were sent to Pennsylvania to be placed under General Washington. Some fought in the battles of Princeton and Brandywine, and the bitter and bloody struggle at Germantown, October 4, 1777. In this battle the heroic and noble patriot, Henry Irwin, fell dead upon the battlefield.

In this battle Edgecombe lost a son of noble worth. His body lies covered with the soil of another State, but his heroic deeds

and character are a product of Edgecombe County. Over his remains at Germantown a marble has been erected bearing this inscription:

In honor to the Brave  
Hic jacet in pace.  
Colonel Henry Irwin, of North Carolina  
Captain Turner  
Adjutant Lucas and six soldiers,  
Killed in the Battle of Germantown,  
One cause, one grave.

J. F. W.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Irwin left three sons and several daughters. Two of his sons died without issue; the third left a son and two granddaughters. One of his daughters married in Halifax, leaving one son, Thomas Burgess, who died without marrying. Another daughter married Governor Stokes, and their daughter married Wm. B. Lewis, of Tennessee, Auditor of the Treasury of the United States. Her daughter married Alphonso Pageot, at one time envoy from France to the United States.

The sister of Colonel Irwin married Lawrence Toole, whose son, grandson, and great grandson inherited the name of Henry Irwin Toole, all distinguished for ability, influence, and popularity in Edgecombe. James W. Clark married a daughter of H. I. Toole, the first.

The name of William Haywood, of this county, appears among the men of 1776. It is to be regretted that so little is known of his birth, services, and death. The records prove that in various offices, both civil and military, he was a true patriot and useful citizen. He was a member of the Committee of Safety for the Halifax district, 1775, a member of the State Congress at Halifax (April, 1776), and also of the State Convention which met at same place in November, 1776, which formed the State Constitution. He was one of the committee which framed that historical document. He was elected one of the Counsellors of State, the first ever elected in the State (December, 1776).

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<sup>1</sup> The thanks of the State and the gratitude of every friend of Edgecombe are due to Mr. Watson, "author of the *Annals of Philadelphia*," for his generous and patriotic gift to the memory of the heroic dead. He was a son of Wilson and a son of Edgecombe at the time of the inscription.



William Haywood was the uncle of the noted and distinguished John Haywood, a jurist and writer in this State and Tennessee. He was the father of John Haywood, Treasurer of the State from 1787 to 1827, after whom Haywood County is named; and of Sherwood, Stephen, and William H. Haywood, Sr., of Raleigh, the latter being the father of Wm. H. Haywood, Jr., Senator in Congress from 1843 to 1846. William Haywood was the son of John Haywood, an Englishman, who came from the Barbadoes to Edgecombe County and settled not far from the present Walnut Creek and Dunbar bridge across Tar River, and here William Haywood was born. The family subsequently moved to Wake County.

The military operations in the county, as in almost every other county in the colony, were carried out by the energetic minority. There were many who first enlisted in the fervor of the moment, but who on reflection decided that they did not care to be separated from their families or farms. Naturally enlistment meant that they would be compelled to fight anywhere Congress decided. Colonel Jonas Johnson, in a letter to Governor Caswell, on November 24, 1778, shows the situation very plainly. He makes plain his grief when he wrote that he had sent to Caswell the commissions of Captain Davis and Ensign Gray, the former because of infirmity and the latter for cowardice. This left the detachment without any captain. Lieutenant Lee, who was a volunteer, and who accepted the office when Davis resigned, headed the company without any commission. Colonel Johnson, moreover, reported the resignation of many of the officers and men, and pleaded for some method to restore the men to the services of the country.

The commissary department was in excellent order in 1778, Colonel Johnson having just furnished Captain Lee with 934 pounds of beef, 21 barrels of meal. The spirits of the men was good; their health good, and they were ready to encounter any difficulty. But Colonel Johnson deplored the fact that many of the old captains would not go with them. At this time another detachment was being drafted by Colonel Johnson in the county to be put into the regular army as soon as possible.

The task and importance of provisioning the troops of the country as fast as they could be mustered was no small item. Edge-

combe in this respect, however, showed remarkable power of organization and ability. In 1779 Edward Hall was appointed as commissioner. From the fall of that year to January, 1781, he sent the troops from Edgecombe 100 barrels of pork, 25 bushels of salt, an article essentially necessary and scarce at that time, and a considerable quantity of meal. By 1781 provisions became a matter of no little importance. There was scarcely any food in the west that could be furnished to the troops. Along the borders of the counties of Nash, Johnston, Pitt, and Edgecombe were numerous ringleaders who had harbored deserters from the armies and had signed articles of association or enlistment whereby they had obligated themselves to prevent the militia from being drafted. This was the beginning of a lawlessness which required a military force to suppress and restore civil authority.

In the meantime the County Court had been virtually suspended. The Granville district was under martial law. The economic stress and the lawlessness of many of the inhabitants placed in the hands of the military authorities full power of regulating the county affairs. Elisha Battle, as the dominant figure of the Council of Safety, acted with a committee appointed by the Governor of North Carolina to try all cases of criminal action and sedition in the county. The people generally obeyed the mandates of a self-created power—termed a committee—which absorbed all authority, both civil and military. Indeed, orders were complied with more readily than they were before the courts were suspended. None sought to evade the military regulations except the Tories. A body of this element entrenched themselves in the southwest part of the county, and a considerable number in the northeast for the ostensible purpose of showing open resistance. However, all their designs were frustrated without any bloodshed. There were also at this time several Scotch merchants residing in the county. They openly expressed themselves as remaining loyal to the British Government, and were forced to leave Edgecombe, according to the law of the military tribunal.

At this time unscrupulous means were resorted to by designing men to pass worthless money upon the citizens in the county. The problem of financing the troops and all military activities in

North Carolina had been turned over to William Haywood, of Edgecombe County. In 1776 he issued \$500,000 in currency in addition to the one million which had been previously emitted. At the time unscrupulous schemes were formed by David Smith and Daniel Guin to perpetrate frauds upon the people at large. In 1776 the gang began to pass counterfeit money, and they were detected in August of that year. A \$5.00 bill was discovered on Smith's person after several futile attempts to dispose of it, and he was sent up for prosecution before Mr. Battle. In November of the same year (1776) Daniel Guin, at the instigation of Solomon Nettle, William Copes, and James Bognor was convicted in like manner.

These men proved to be Tories and were leagued with several others who at that time conspired to slay the principal leaders of the American cause in Edgecombe before leaving with British officers who were recruiting in the county. Moreover, Guin and Smith, acting with several others in sympathy with the British, were stationed on the line of Edgecombe to prevent the military from drafting men from the King's army, and also those who were attempting to remain neutral. These men were making strenuous efforts to associate this element with the English troops.

It happened at this time that Colonel Henry Irwin was in Tarboro convalescing from a wound he had received in the South Carolina campaign. His health had prevented him from attending at Halifax previous to the departure of the militia, which had mobilized there, to assist the Continental army in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He became aware of the conspiracy of the Tories and wrote Governor Caswell apprising him of the situation. In the meantime about 30 or 40 adherents to the authority of Great Britain attempted to storm Tarboro. Colonel Irwin assembled about 25 men to oppose them. He, by his bravery and wise leadership, disarmed the entire band and compelled them to take an oath of allegiance to the State, and to promise to support and defend the independent government against Great Britain. One Mr. Brimage, a man of considerable influence and wealth, and the leader of the Tories, was arrested and exiled from the State.

The following year the Provincial Congress passed a confiscation act, depriving the Tories of their property and compelling

them to take the oath of allegiance. The severity of the act, however, caused much opposition, and it was never put into force in its entirety. Many who refused to take the oath were permitted to remain in the county, but were deprived of the rights of citizenship.

In 1778 the suppressed courts were again reopened, and the wheels of civil authority began to grind out justice through the proper channel. The sheriff of the county again made his appearance at the regular sessions of Superior Court and discharged his duties according to procedure of law before the beginning of the Revolution. The county previous to this time had not been infested with any invasion by the British, but now the trend of the military movements of the British was southward, and Edgecombe was destined to witness the scene of bloodshed and unhappy suffering on her own soil.

Lord Cornwallis made his approach to Edgecombe after the battle of Guilford Court House by way of the Cape Fear. The resources of the county had been greatly diminished in both men and supplies by sending aid to South Carolina when that State was invaded in 1780-81. Joshua Potts, who was then commissioner in Edgecombe for the army, had sent on May 1st, just about eight days before Tarleton reached the county, 3,000 pounds of bacon and much flour to Colonel Briton near Salisbury. Of the six North Carolina battalions and the thousand North Carolina State militia that surrendered at Charleston, more than 700 were from Edgecombe County. Also much salt, flour, and meat had been sent to support these troops in the campaign in South Carolina and also to Pennsylvania. The people throughout the section of the State were soon to realize the results of their unselfishness.

Late in April, 1781, Lord Cornwallis deserted his camp at Cross Creek and prepared to march towards the Roanoke. He had with him about 1,500 men, composing a small detachment of royal artillery with four cannons, several battalions and a brigade of guards. Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton, with 180 dragoons, and Halmington's guard of Loyalists, was sent ahead of the army as a scout. They reached Tar River, near the mouth of Town Creek, early in May. The approach of the British gave the remaining Loyalists in the county renewed courage for resistance and uprising. The appearance of the British and the obvious rise of the



Tories necessitated the sending away of the valuable papers of the commissioners at Tarboro and the records of the court house. People in the vicinity became afraid to sleep at night for fear of attack and capture. Several Tories from Martin and Craven Counties visited the county while Tarleton was camping on Tar River. They proceeded to the house of Benjamin Vichous, one of their chief leaders, who assisted in organizing a body of Loyalists. They immediately joined the British forces, taking 21 head of cattle which they collected for the British army.

Although the county had experienced and passed through several rebellions in the twenty years which preceded the Revolution, it now became the stage for a reign of terror. The advance guard under Tarleton reached Edgecombe about May 5th. His first action was to order the inhabitants to collect large quantities of provisions for the King's troops. In order to overawe the scattered militia in the county, he exaggerated the number of Cornwallis' army. This enabled him to secure a retreat for his dragoons and Loyalists. He pushed forward toward Fishing Creek and made another effort to secure large supplies of flour and meal for the army. He decided, in order to effect his designs, upon finding the county abundantly supplied with provisions, to make a quick march against Halifax, where a store of provisions was then in keeping for the American troops. General Summer was at Halifax at the time, and on May 6, 1781, he wrote General Greene that he intended to evacuate Halifax and move to Warren County or Greenville, taking all stores with him.

In the meantime large forces of militia were gathering from the different sections of Edgecombe, Pitt, and Northampton counties to repel the British. Tarleton learned this and decided upon immediate action. Word of this reached the inhabitants of Halifax and Edgecombe and the militia was urged forward to meet the British at Swift Creek. The two forces met at Swift Creek Run May 7th. Most of the American troops were inexperienced and badly disorganized, and were forced to withdraw to Fishing Creek. Here another engagement took place; again the militia and citizens were unsuccessful in checking Tarleton's dragoons and Loyalists. The road was open to Halifax, and the British marched forward, reaching Halifax town on May 9th.



Meanwhile Cornwallis was still on Tar River, encamped on Crowell's Plantation. He hesitated to venture forward to the Roanoke, not having heard from General Phillips as to the conditions in Virginia. He wrote Tarleton to remain in Halifax until he heard from Phillips. If, however, Tarleton did not hear from him in two or three days he was to rejoin Cornwallis at Cob's mill near Roanoke River. On May 8th, Cornwallis wrote General Phillips in order to ascertain his plans and to make arrangements to join him on James River. He then sent a messenger to Tarleton to meet him at Fashing Creek and march with him to Virginia. The evacuation of the British from Edgecombe and Halifax relieved the minds of the people considerably and enabled the militia to reorganize and check the Loyalists who did not march with Cornwallis. These two skirmishes on Swift and Fishing Creek were the first and last appearance of the main army of the British in Edgecombe.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of the British in the county, however, had a detrimental effect in two ways. It created much unrest among the Tories who remained, and the provisions were considerably decreased by waste and use by a part of the British troops. Also at this time money was getting to be a very necessary asset to the American cause. There was practically no specie money, not only in Edgecombe County, but in the entire State, while paper money was depreciated. Various means were devised to secure specie to finance the militia which the State put upon the battleground. In July, 1781, two months after the British had departed, Robert Bignall was appointed by Governor Burke to collect monies in the county to support the cause of the Revolution, but his commission was a failure. But if the inhabitants did not have money, they possessed the next thing to actual cash—tobacco. A warehouse was constructed in Tarboro where the commodity was both borrowed and purchased. Certificates were given for the amount of the price which was agreed upon the quantity purchased. In order to offset the hardships upon those who held the certificates, the paper was exempted from taxation and bore interest at

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Battle in his article on Edgecombe County (*N. C. U. Maz.* 2 p., 1860-61) says that Edgecombe was never the scene of battle. The information he needed at the time he wrote, 1812, was not available; consequently his statement.

the rate of six per cent per annum. The certificates were redeemable on the first day of December, 1783, in specie or its value in State currency. In like manner in order to procure arms and munitions several citizens loaned their tobacco on the same terms as those who sold their tobacco to the State. A book was kept by Mr. Bignall of all persons who sold or loaned their commodities and compensation was made according to the quantity deposited in the warehouse. In order also to secure additional troops for the service of the Revolution, power of imprisonment was also suspended. Persons who were in prisons were set at liberty to defend the State and to further the Revolutionary cause. Under this method and by general conscription, the county sent 100 more men to assist Wilmington in 1781-82, after the greater part of the men of military age had been placed in active service. The reports of the militia for May 6, 1782, show that Edgecombe furnished one colonel, one lieutenant-colonel, two majors, ten captains, ten lieutenants, ten ensigns, and 650 non-commissioned officers and privates that year alone.

Although the county was prompt in providing military support and means for a successful effort for independence, it was not to escape disgrace caused by desertion. Surely in the Revolution where so many types made up the population, it is no surprise that the lukewarm would fail during the most trying period of the struggle. The closing of the year 1782 and the beginning of 1783 were indeed the time which tried men's souls. In Edgecombe County provisions were scarce, all resources well nigh exhausted, clothes worn threadbare, shoes not available, and pressure weighed upon the troops from every angle. Just on the verge of success, which naturally was a surprise to those who fought for the right of freedom, at the time when victory was to come to those who fought and suffered with unyielding fortitude, a few careworn and weary stragglers deserted the post of duty, leaving the more faithful ones to bear the brunt of trial and to reap the reward of those who faint not. The names of Daniel Rogers, George Browning, Ralph Vickers, and a few others from Edgecombe cannot claim any honor nor bequeath to posterity any commendable deeds for their desertion from the military post at Kinston in August, 1782.

The economic and military conditions in the county again brought about an uprising of the Loyalists, which proved to be their final undoing. The Loyalists who still embraced a good portion of the civilian population, by schemes and artifices, disaffected a number of the troops who were under command of Colonel Henry Hart. These troops were citizens of Edgecombe, and had been raised to take part in the final resistance to British rule. Much discomfort existed among them because of the scarcity of food and clothing. And were depressed, for dark clouds portending defeat were still hanging over the whole American army. The Loyalists took advantage of the situation and succeeded in enticing Daniel Stringer and others from the American army. These deserters not only abandoned the cause of liberty, but enlisted in the British army. Late in 1782, however, Stringer, with several more of his comrades, suffered a compunction of conscience and repented. Stringer petitioned Governor Burke for a pardon, and after having taken an oath of allegiance and promising to rejoin the State troops, he returned to Tarboro and served under Colonel Hart until the close of the Revolution.

The attitude toward the remaining Loyalists in the country was rapidly undergoing a radical change as a result of their machinations. The patience of the patriots was fast being exhausted under the strain of economic and military pressure. Those remaining in Tarboro were dispersed abroad, many going to Canada; others departed for England. The English Church was completely demoralized and suspended all church functions until the beginning of the nineteenth century. In spite of the many reproaches and acts of ostracism, a few remained. They, however, were deprived by law of their rights as citizens. They were disqualified to enter suit against citizens, to vote, or to retain their property.

Following the Revolution the County of Edgecombe assumed new life, Tarboro gave evidence of becoming a place of consequence. Fine peach orchards were set and increasing crops of tobacco were cultivated throughout the county. However, the land was still sparsely settled at the head of Tar River. The West was gradually extending its frontier and Edgecombe for a hundred miles gave some signs of new habitations.

The local interest and participation of Edgecombe in the Revolution ended in Tarboro in 1787-88. During this year the General Assembly met in Tarboro for its first time. During the sitting of the Assembly an act was passed declaring the treaty of peace between the United States and the King of Great Britain to be a part of the law of the land. The courts of law and equity were again declared to have jurisdiction in all causes and questions. Elisha Battle was elected chairman, and he presided over the rapid and heated debates of the fundamental rules and provisions of the new State government. The adoption and ratification of the Constitution was followed by the first appearance of political parties on decided lines, the discussion of which follows.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLITICS AFTER THE REVOLUTION

The era of politics in Edgecombe and the beginning of the phase of public life, which was destined to make the county the scene of many hot campaigns and enthusiastic gatherings, commenced with the legislation in 1783. Many differences of opinions as to the policies affecting the State and nation were prevalent. During the Revolution parties sprang into being which favored and opposed the policies adopted against Great Britain. Two classes of men—whig and tories—lived in the county. The whigs, which constituted a majority, sought by legislative means to overpower the tories, and to some extent were successful. In 1778 about sixty-three tories were compelled to take the State oath of allegiance, before allowed to remain in the county.<sup>1</sup>

One of the early laws affecting the tory element was the confiscation acts. Considerable attention was given to this issue, and the tories had some sympathizers in the county. Many were connected with them by kindred ties and mutual feeling. With this background it is interesting to know how Edgecombe would support the law of confiscation. A bill concerning lands which had been confiscated by the State passed in the House of Commons, and was subsequently received by the Senate. In May, 1783, Elisha Battle, senator from Edgecombe, refused to support the bill and voted against its passage. Four years later the session of the General Assembly was held in Tarboro. Party differences, which were buried in oblivion in 1776, were reawakened when State and national issues came to the fore in 1787. Etheldred Philips, one of the representatives from the county, became an active supporter of the tory cause. The patriotic spirit, which was then predominate, actuated him to be mild in his support, however, and the matter of determining the disposition of Loyalist property, elicited a stand against confiscating lands, unless a trial by jury was given. This stand by Battle and Philips caused no little interest in local politics, and had influence on the attitude these men took in 1788.

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<sup>1</sup> James Langston was district officer. James Milner and William Taping refused to take oath and were driven from the State.



In the meantime it became evident, both from indications in Congress and in the State, that the advocates for different measures were fast arranging themselves into two distinct parties. The conflict of war was soon to be forgotten in the bitter struggle for political supremacy. It was apparent that the one great issue which was to elicit party lines was to be that of ratifying the Constitution. The legislature called a convention to meet at Hillsboro July, 1788. Curiously enough it was soon known that one of the most prominent leaders in North Carolina—Willie Jones—was to oppose the adoption of the new Constitution. Many others in the State were moved with a similar spirit. It was the beginning of parties; party intrigues, and alliances in North Carolina. James Iredell, one of the political giants of this time, became a strong advocate for a strong Federal Government, while Willie Jones, Timothy Bloodworth, and David Caldwell for the republican spirit.

Meanwhile local sentiment in Edgecombe was shaping the minds of the people for participation in the pending struggle. The elections for delegates to the convention was held in April, resulting in the defeat of the Federal element. In this election the Revolutionary spirit had not entirely disappeared, and it was natural that men of the conservative type should have the honor of representing the county in the first State convention. Edgecombe elected Elisha Battle, Robert Digges, Etheldred Gray, William Fort, and Bythel Bell. Elisha Battle was a man of considerable ability, wise, and an ardent Republican. He was a survival of the Revolutionary struggle, who still kept intact his wisdom, counsel, and his usual fairness in political controversy. The other delegates were also of the Republican tendency.

The delegates met with the convention in Hillsboro, July 25, 1788. The principal object was to deliberate and determine a plan for a Federal Government. Battle was placed on the committee to draw up rules of decorum. Gray was placed on the committee of elections. During the procedure of the convention James Iredell, a strong Federalist, proposed a series of amendments to the Constitution, whereby certain power was to be delegated to Congress, which would strengthen the Federal Government. This proposal strengthened the existing party lines, and the Edgecombe delegation, true to the principles of Republicanism, cast its votes

solidly in the negative and with the majority. The convention, while the majority wanted ratification, neither ratified nor rejected the Constitution proposed for the government of the United States.

It is obvious, according to the Edgecombe vote, that Republican tendencies were predominate in the county. Later evidences substantiate this statement. This did not mean, however, that the county or its delegates were adverse to ratifying the Constitution, but that objection was voiced to the Federal amendment proposed by Iredell.

In the meantime the people of Edgecombe addressed a letter of grievance to Governor Samuel Johnson, in which they claimed they suffered by the decision of the late convention. They accordingly recommended another convention. The following year a convention was called to meet in Fayetteville on the 3d of November. Edgecombe sent Etheldred Gray, Jeremiah Hilliard, Etheldred Philips, William Fort, and Thomas Blount. Only two of the previous delegates were returned. Thomas Blount was perhaps the most able man in the delegation. He was a man of the Revolutionary school, having enlisted as an ensign, at the age of seventeen. He was taken prisoner during the war; sent to England, and returned after the cessation of hostilities. At the time of the convention he was a merchant in Tarboro, and later became one of the earliest Republican congressmen from this district.

After the convention was called to order and the preliminaries were dispensed with, it resolved itself into a committee of the whole convention. Immediately amendments were proposed by the Federalists to be laid before Congress. When the vote was called Phillips, Blount, and Hilliard voted negatively. Gray and Fort were either not present or refused to vote. The majority desiring ratification, but preferring ratification without amendments, the question of concurring with the convention was placed on motion, and Philips, Blount, Hilliard, and Fort voted affirmatively. Gray failed to vote.

This decided tendency of Republicanism was prevalent in the county on all issues affecting national and State policies. In 1790, just before the question of refunding the State debts incurred during the Revolution, and the rise of the National Bank, President Washington, for political reasons, planned a journey through



THOMAS BLOUNT



the Southern States. In 1791 he turned his attention southward, and in March he began his tour, arriving in North Carolina in April.

He visited Halifax on April 16th, and started for Tarboro on the morning of the 18th. He was met at Roanoke River by Colonel Ashe, representative of the district, who escorted him to Tarboro.<sup>1</sup> General Washington was welcomed with a warm hospitality, being saluted with a single piece of artillery, and cordially entertained at the "beautiful residence overlooking Tar River," belonging at the time to Major Reading Blount. No man possessed greater acumen in observing the political sentiments of the people than General Washington, and with tact and ingenuity he sought the people's opinion of the political issues of the day.

It is not to be inferred that because party beginning were evident in the State and county, in 1788, the county was organized at once into a political machine with definite platforms and issues. Nothing could be further from correct. Indeed legislators, sheriffs, and other officers were elected in the same old way, with nothing more than minor local issues to determine a difference in candidates for several years.

In November, 1790, the first political boundaries were established in North Carolina. The State was divided into five divisions for a more effective means of electing Representatives to United States Congress and other political positions. Edgecombe, and eight other eastern counties, formed the Roanoke division, and like the other districts were allowed one representative to Congress, eligible after being a resident of one of the counties from which elected for at least one year. The procedure of the election is worthy of comment in order to understand something of the political machinery of that day. The sheriff of each county in the district was the returning officer; constituted the political boss with considerable power and authority. It was the duty of the sheriff on the first day of February to repair to Tarboro to count the votes cast in order to determine which candidate had received the greatest number.

Separate and special means were devised for those in the militia to vote during elections. In 1800 a special law was enacted giv-

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<sup>1</sup> President Washington took noon-day meal with one Slaughter, about fourteen miles from Tarboro.



ing Edgecombe the privilege to muster at the home of Joseph Pender and James Phillips for separate elections. It appears, however, that this law was ignored by the field officers in the county, who desired to muster, as formerly, at Tarboro. The legislature passed an amendment forbidding a muster at Tarboro in order to make the demands to muster at Pender's and Phillips' more emphatic and mandatory. The results of this law afforded much convenience to the inhabitants of the county. The residence of Pender gave Captain Eason, Todd, Robbins, Wood, and Ruth an opportunity to register and vote their men in the western part of the county without having to proceed some forty miles to Tarboro. Moreover the distance from Tarboro offered a good reason for the citizens of Northern Edgecombe to petition for a separate election. Phillips' residence was accordingly designated as a place for mustering and Daniel Ross, Jeremiah Hillard, David Copfield, Sherwood Savage, and Elias Bryant were elected as a committee to supervise the elections.

The sheriff or his deputies attended the election on the evening before and received all the votes from those eligible for suffrage. He opened the ballot at Tarboro on the evening of Friday after the second Thursday in August, in order to ascertain the candidates receiving the majority of votes. Precautionary measures were employed to prevent one citizen from voting twice, once at Northern Edgecombe and again at Tarboro. A fine of ten pounds was enacted as the penalty for detected parties, and the sheriff was not allowed to count the votes until all suffrages were taken. All ballots from Pender's and Phillips' were carried to Tarboro in a sealed box until all the districts voted. The seal was broken in the presence of the inspectors, sealed again until the election in Tarboro.

The Congressional election 1793 was full of excitement and thrilling episodes. John B. Ashe, of Halifax, had the first honor of representing this district in Congress, but with the new election he was succeeded by Thomas Blount, of Edgecombe. There was an entire change in the delegation, and a rapid departure of the policies which caused the obvious election of a new candidate. The anti-Federalists were rapidly assuming new power both in Congress and the State legislature. State politics and the legisla-

ture had previous to this time been comparatively conservative, but in 1794 Edgecombe substituted John Leigh, an astute politician and reputed parliamentarian of Republican principles.

He served as chairman of the House for several sessions, beginning from 1795, at which time there arose an increasing bitterness between the Federalists and the Republicans over the interpretation of the Federal Constitution, and the foreign policy of the American Government. The State generally witnessed an exasperating effect at the decline (although not defeat) of the Republicans in 1796. They resented without avail the encroachments of the Federalists in disregarding the agreements laid down in the Federal compact. The powers were limited, but the Federal leaders were using unlimited powers in accomplishing policies of State, both in finance and pending war with France. There was a warm contest in the fall election. John Leigh was defeated for Legislature by Colonel Nathan Mayo, a man of influence and some talent, but by the grace of much force, and campaigning, Thomas Blount was more successful and remained in Congress.<sup>1</sup>

Federalism lost its influence in national affairs, until the election of Jefferson in 1801. It began a downward pace which culminated in failure owing to the loss of its principal leader, Alexander Hamilton, in 1806. North Carolina was Republican, with every hamlet carrying the banner of Jefferson and Democracy. Every position almost, in North Carolina, was occupied by a Republican. But this was too much of a happy state to be permanent. Too sweet and memorable for history, and too full of satiety for ease.

With the retirement of Jefferson in 1809, Mr. Madison assumed the presidency, inheriting the foreign complications which were far from being settled. He was possessed with taciturnity and irresolutions, which caused him to rely upon his party supporters. This gave the Federalists an opportunity to get new breath and an opportunity to push their interest, which had been inactive for nearly ten years. In the revival of party spirit in 1809 Edgecombe County became the scene for a warm campaign, so much so that

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Blount, the son of Jacob Blount, was born May 10, 1759. After the war he entered into a partnership with his brother, John Gray Blount, of Washington, N. C., and ran a branch store at Tarboro. These brothers conducted a large mercantile and shipping business. Thomas Blount died in Washington City in 1812, and being a member of Congress at the time, was buried in the Congressional Cemetery.

the Congressional election resulted in the election of Willis Aston, who though not an avowed Federalist, leaned toward that faith. From other sections of the State out and out Federalists were elected.

An important political issue affecting Edgecombe County at this time was being agitated in North Carolina courts. Earl Granville heirs were attempting, through the Supreme Court of the United States, to lay valid claims to the property held by Earl Granville prior to the Revolution. To permit their claims would involve rights to land which were held by citizens of Edgecombe and other eastern counties, which had been cut off from Edgecombe since 1755. North Carolina courts had previously decided that the claims were invalid. The county was secured from further trouble and embarrassment by the death of Francis Key, counsel for the British heirs. Edgecombe politicians resented further inquiries in the matter, when the issue became one of national debate. Lined up with Edgecombe representatives in the State legislature were the representatives from Halifax, Granville, Nash, Johnston, and Pitt counties. The matter reached a successful conclusion, however, in 1809, when the suit was dismissed through the want of bond to push the case.

The Federalists in the county were still weak when the year 1811 found North Carolina on the verge of assisting in the war of 1812. Not all Republicans thought that the nation was in favor of war, and Edgecombe especially was lukewarm as represented by Thomas Blount. The following year a bitter campaign was conducted among the candidates for Congress. Mr. Blount, who was deceased, was succeeded by Willis Alston, Jr., of Halifax.

About this time there appeared a figure which was destined to make the annals of Edgecombe history glitter with political fervor. A man with a purpose in view, and with a career to make, came to the forefront in politics and war. Louis D. Wilson loved Edgecombe with a loyal love, and although he possessed no classical education nor a genius, he became a figure of value to the public welfare. At each session of the legislature to which he was elected he was becoming more familiar and effective as a politician and legislator. The life of Wilson presents both a saddened and brilliant glare upon the archives of Edgecombe's political history.

His first prominent appearance upon the political arena was in 1827. Democracy in Edgecombe had gained a foothold, which grew stronger and stronger as this political genius grew in power. The thirteenth district, of which Edgecombe was a part, put out two candidates for presidential elector—William Clark, of Pitt, and Louis D. Wilson, of Edgecombe. They agreed upon no electioneering, and it is doubtful if the records of the national and State elections could furnish a parallel. Frauds, corruption, and bribery existed in all parts of the country. A militia company, under Captain White, remained at Beach Swamps during the election.

The county, however, by the time of the election, was decidedly in favor of Jackson. The newspapers sounded the trumpet of Adams buying the presidential chair from Clay, by giving the latter the office of Secretary of State. The circulation of pamphlets throughout the county to this effect injured Adams, and decreased the number of votes for him. A freeman in his broken English wrote a letter to the *Tarboro Free Press*, October 27, 1827, that Clay and Adams ought to be tied together, and cast into the Chesapeake Bay. Strange to say this man voiced the opinions also of the majority of negro voters, who thought Jackson should be the next President, because he would round out some of the "big folks" at Washington, and let them know what it was to "fool with the free men of the country."

The returns of the election showed seventy-nine votes for Jackson and only three for Adams. This return was immediately protested and submitted to the editor of the *United States Telegraph* to solve. The announcement that all Jackson voters, after the votes were counted, would be given plenty to eat and drink decided the majority.

Immediately after Jackson's election two political issues became prominent, one of which has lasted to the present day. The first of these was that of the tariff. Edgecombe County today has a survival of the old theory advanced during Jackson's administration. Before Jackson was inaugurated, several journals in the eastern counties held him up to the people as an advocate of the policy of protection, but they had remained totally silent as regarded Adams' opinion on the same subject. The editor of the *Tarboro Free Press*, in voicing the sentiments of the citizens of Edgecombe, sent out a declaration of their opinions. They were



in favor of a judicious examination of the revision of the tariff, and in so far as it embraced the design of fostering, protecting, and preserving within themselves the means of national defense and independence, particularly in a state of war, they supported it.

The condition of the times—burden of the Revolution and War of 1812,<sup>1</sup> the issue of bonds and internal improvements—demanded a careful and judicious tariff to pay off the national debt, and to afford a means of defense on which the safety of the country and the liberty of the people depended. The eastern people, however, never favored direct taxation to pay this great national debt, and it has always been a known fact that they desire protection on other resources than their own.

This opinion was expressed by a public meeting on September 17, 1827. The citizens gathered at James Bridgers, where a vote was taken against the tariff, one hundred and twenty-seven against and none in favor of the measure. A resolution was drawn up, signifying that the present tariff law of the United States was "iniquitous in principle, oppressive in operation, adverse to the intent and spirit of the Constitution, and dangerous to the integrity of the Union." The politicians opposed the suggestion of a convention of the friends of States Rights (the second issue following Jackson's election) and "Free Trade."

On the 22d of September, 1827, a considerable number of voters of the county assembled at the court house and considered the project of sending delegates to Free Trade Convention, which was to assemble in Philadelphia on the 30th of September. Both meetings, one on the 17th, another on the 30th, agreed on the nature of Free Trade and its consequences, and appointed Louis D. Wilson and Francis L. Dancy delegates to attend the convention in behalf of Edgecombe in order to redress the wrongs of the people in the county. Freetrade became such a popular movement that goods were advertised in the county as free trade goods.

The first public demonstration of State rights in Edgecombe occurred in the fall of 1827 during the election of W. Little, who was a rising politician of promising ability and influence. He

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<sup>1</sup> Edgecombe made valuable contribution to this war. Edgecombe troops were in Fifth Brigade, gave one colonel, one major, fifteen captains, fifteen first lieutenants, fourteen ensigns, and one adjutant, one paymaster, one surgeon on the brigade staff. It also gave more than 1,000 firearms, including shot guns, muskets, rifles, cespontoons, and cartridge boxes. It sent 1,209 privates, sergeants, corporals, drummers, fifers, and one major general.



offered a toast at a political meeting which opened the way for further agitation on this issue, "Arise, North Carolina," he said, "shake off the yoke, proclaim your states rights, be free and may the Heavens protect you."

On December 22d of the same year, a notice was issued for a meeting to be held in the town of Stantonburg, now in Wilson County, for the citizens of Edgecombe, Green, and Wayne counties to express their sentiments in regard to the presidential election. Approximately 250 people were present; William Speight was elected chairman and Thomas Speight, secretary. A committee was appointed consisting of Thomas Speight, Dr. Blake Little, Benjamin Miller, Patrick S. Comwell, and Will Little to prepare resolutions for the consideration of the meeting. A better insight can be obtained as to the condition and nature of the issue by the following preamble this committee submitted:

"It is the undoubted birthright of every American citizen to express publicly his opinion both of public men and measures. In order, however, to give time and energy to this most important and popular prerogative, it should be resorted to only in cases.

"Be it resolved, therefore, that we, the free people of Edgecombe, Wayne, and Greene, will use our utmost execution to promote the election of General Jackson to the presidential chair." This resolution was the voice of the meeting, as was, and now is, the custom. Great political symbols were made as toasts, beginning with General Washington, the Father of the country, and concluding with General Jackson, sitting at the helm of the great national ship, with Commodore Porter for his pilot and J. C. Calhoun, first mate.

It is worthy of notice that the Edgecombe citizens did not vary from the rules of politicians in this meeting. A moral issue was accepted as a plank in abolishment of corruption, and the moral support of a protection of the "Fair Sex." The Adams, Clay, and Co., the political intriguers, were to be hurled from their seats and recollected only for their "catalogue of crimes."

Edgecombe politicians were very much against internal improvements. One of the campaign slogans was: "Internal improvement by Congress at a wrong place, a wrong time and by wrong men."

By 1830 States rights theory was very strongly lodged in the minds of the Edgecombe Democrats. The movement was more popularly supported when it became known that James Iredell declined to be re-elected to the United States Senate. Edgecombe politicians began to consider the man who was next best fitted to uphold the political end of the government. They favored and supported Jackson's administration. A circular decree in the form of advertisement was issued for one who would manfully and ably defend the glorious cause in which the friends of "States Rights" were engaged. They wanted a man who had identified himself with the cause of Jackson and his reform. To this end the name of General Speight, of the Newbern district, received the prompt approval of the majority of the Democrats in Edgecombe.

With the close of the contest of 1828 between Adams and Jackson, the bank bill became an issue of absorbing interest to the Edgecombe politicians. The Adams party believed in internal improvements, expansion of the Constitution and high protective tariff. These policies, however, died an easy and gradual death under the astute plans of Jackson.

The themes of Jefferson were once more resorted to in the conflict, and the split of the two wings of the Republican party followed. Edgecombe supported Jackson in the fight until toward the close of the second administration.

The question and controversy over the banks demanded the first consideration of the people after Jackson's inauguration. In Jackson's first speech he had intimated that the banks as they were constituted were unconstitutional. This proved to be a mere beginning of a long struggle, and one which Edgecombe had a considerable share. In the State Legislature in 1811 Edgecombe had lifted her voice against the rechartering of the bank when the bill was before the State Assembly. But by 1816 the sentiment changed, and Clark, of Edgecombe, voted, with a considerable majority, in favor of rechartering the bank a second time. In this instance, however, the Republicans supported, and the Federalists opposed the measure. Without any hesitancy of speech, Jackson openly declared he opposed further expansion of the bank by

Wellesley, February 27<sup>th</sup> 1878

Gentlemen

It has been my earnest wish and great hope to have the honor to pay a visit to the City of Carlborough, and I was lamenting the impossibility to indulge these feelings when your so very kind and gratifying communication makes me still more desirous, as I have seen between the propriety to learn the date of the opening of the Union before the birth day's celebration, and the duty to attend at the only surviving remnant of the Revolutionary Army, as the celebration that is to take place on Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> June, I have seen these two anniversary days joined up five thousand miles to travel. My situation in these respects I have more fully and I hope in a satisfactory manner, explained to the gentlemen who have been pleased very kindly to deliver your much valued invitation. Indeed, gentlemen, if you were not to be able to pursue my respects to you in person, but the days of my leave are so severely counted and arranged that I must not allow myself any delay, however gratifying it would be, to take of your up the second duty fellow companions in arms, and the previous appointments which urge me on. I beg you to accept my respectful apology, and affirmative acknowledgments.

Lafayette

N<sup>o</sup> 13 This is the copy of Boul Lafayette in his own handwriting to the Committee from Carlboro. who invited him to the hospitalities of the place. (a sacred relic)



granting charters or otherwise. Where would Edgecombe cast her voice? Follow political creeds or yield to economic interest and needs?

In 1829 the State bank question was taken before the General Assembly of North Carolina. For the time being the policies of Jackson were ignored and party prejudice eliminated. As a consequence of this and much other agitation it was rejected by the Commons in the March session of 1829. Moreover, much conflict arose from the appointment of a committee to investigate. This committee was invested with power to examine persons and to ascertain the exact conditions of the bank. It was soon discovered that two parties existed among the members of the committee, those who desired to present the banks in the worst light possible and those who sought to palliate their conduct in handling the financial affairs of the State. The result was an agreement could not be obtained on a single report. Each party, therefore, made its own report; one describing the banks in the darkest colors, and the other palliating any offense and act of the banking institution.

Several days after the reports were made and the bill had been rejected, the Grand Jury at the March Term of the Superior Court of Edgecombe discharged their duties as Grand Jurors, and took in consideration the presentments made by the committee from Wayne and Duplin counties. The jury expressed its opinion inviting the attention of the citizens to the pecuniary embarrassment of the people, the conditions of the banks, and recommended an extra session of the General Assembly of the State to take the subject into their exclusive jurisdiction. The excuse given for the activity of the Grand Jury was evidenced by the results and attitudes of the two above-named counties.

The subject in itself, excluding the political side, was of vital importance to the people. Edgecombe was an infant in banking institutions and her industries were just beginning to become of financial value. A few of the more unbiased and thoughtful people knew something of the wishes and interests of the county generally. It cannot, therefore, be said that the jurors attempted to abuse their power, in expressing the opinion given to them by the people. Nor did they discuss the question of expending or constitutionality of the establishment of the bank in the State, nor



did they go into an agreement in order to show the causes which had produced the derangement of the currency at that time; but the people were, they asserted, greatly indebted to the banks, and that the banks had contributed largely in the production of the present state of affairs.

Edgecombe honestly believed that the people were greatly indebted to the banks and needed them for business purpose. However, as to actual conditions of the debt and the resources of the people to meet it, they said:

"To the different banks of the State, the people owe at least five million dollars the whole debt due from the institutions do not exceed four hundred thousand dollars." This view of the banks would seem to anticipate a closing up of all banking interest. But such is not the time impression, for nearly six years remained to complete the process of demonstration of finances. The time had been in the county when some of the people considered it a credit to owe the bank; they then considered it less than no credit. The people, however, instead of being in the debt of banks, were also indebted to each other. It became a question of owing an individual or owing a bank, some people will be in debt, and a sacrifice of property, in some instances, cannot be avoided. It is the natural consequence of trade and business relations, and no constitutional act can prevent it. The situation then resolves into this: The people desired legislature to compel the banks to extend to their debtors every indulgence which their situations might demand. Naturally this would work hardships on the bank or at least would not be workable business policy, because they would be forced to exercise forbearance in their collections, except interest during the summer and fall months. Then, too, it is easy to see why the people were unanimously in favor of the view of Grand Jurors.

In the meantime local politics was being waged in the county between the Republicans and Jackson followers. Following Jackson's election, Major James W. Clark was appointed clerk to Jackson Electoral College of North Carolina. He had been a member of both branches of the State Legislature, Representative in Congress and principal delegate to the Senate. He was destined to run a political race with some of his colleagues in his native county.

Thomas H. Hall, who had been elected congressman, was still in Congress at Washington under the sign of Democracy. The year 1831 promised to be a heated campaign for him. There had appeared on the scene a young man of considerable ability and astuteness of mind. This person was no less than Joseph R. Loyd. He was practically a self-made man and a lawyer of no little reputation. Through his courtesy of manner, and his kindness and polite attitude toward the people, he had acquired much influence in the county. The time for campaign of 1831 came on and J. R. Loyd threw his hat in the political ring. He had already been a member of the State Legislature in 1821, being elected because of his popularity. Consequently there being no opposition from the Federalists, Loyd began the race, with Dr. Hall, who was also a Republican, as a candidate for Congress. It is not enough to say Loyd was a promising candidate. He was a strong opponent, and Dr. Hall knew it. Francis Dancy, of Tarboro, was a very ardent supporter of Dr. Hall, and being somewhat alarmed over the rapid increase of Loyd's influence issued a circular June 30, 1831, claiming that Loyd in 1821 had voted, while representing Edgecombe in the legislature, in favor of a bill introduced by John Stanley which would decrease the jurisdiction of a single justice from \$100.00 to \$20.00. This issue was considered very beneficial to the people, and equally injurious to the interests of the lawyers. This was done, Dancy claimed, in order to benefit the lawyers.

Since this accusation was made investigations show that Dancy was in error and that no such bill was introduced. Stanley did, however, introduce a bill entitled a bill to preserve the rights of trial by jury, where the amount in controversy exceeded \$20.00, but this did not reduce or purport to reduce the jurisdiction of a Justice of the Peace. This bill provided for an appeal in all cases from the decision of a justice when the amount exceeded \$20.00.

It seems that most of Loyd's opposition came from Washington, where he was not so well known as Dr. Hall. Claims came from that quarter that Loyd was also a Federalist and supported the principles of Adams. It is to Dr. Hall's credit that he carried on the campaign with Loyd in a clean and above board manner. He did Lloyd the justice to declare publicly that he was a Republican and stood for the principles of Jefferson and Jackson.

Dr. Hall, however, had a decided advantage on account of his varied experience in Congress and his splendid record there. It was certain that Dr. Hall's election would be secured, because of his vote to repeal the twenty-fifth section of the Judiciary Act in 1820. The opposition he had grew out of his voting in favor of this repeal, and on his opposition to the internal improvement then in vogue throughout the county. Toward the close of the canvass on the 25th, the election was almost wholly abandoned, and the interest and the internal improvement question was presented to the people for their approval or rejection.

The score against Loyd, therefore, was decidedly in his disfavor and since he had no tangible plank in his campaign platform he was defeated.

In the meantime Jackson's second campaign was in its formative state and political wheels began to turn for national results. One result of Edgecombe's activities could always be depended upon. The political pot always boiled out crowds of followers. It had been no trouble to create interest in a political campaign. Early in May, 1832, pursuant to a public notice the followers of Jackson began to rally around the Democratic banner. The citizens of Edgecombe met in the court house of Tarboro to express their opinion of the re-election of persons to fill the offices of President and Vice-President of the United States, and to appoint delegates to represent the county in the convention held in Colorado on the 18th of January, 1832.

Resolutions were adopted as were thought to meet the approbation of the majority of the citizens of Edgecombe and contributed to the union of party feelings. There was at this time a tide in the affairs of the nation as well as in those of individuals, which was serving to disregard a national unity. The political tide was then moving with a rapid current and without men to demand the rights and interests of her people. Edgecombe, as all the South, would become like a ship on the ocean a wreck, surrendering its privilege and anticipation of future prosperity. The people felt this, they knew it, because a dissolution of the Union had been echoed again and again, not only in the United States, and the individual states, but in almost every county. It remained to be seen by party elections whether the prophecy of the times would be fulfilled. This then was the one great issue before the

voters of Edgecombe when they met at this meeting. In the safety of the interests, the people were willing to safely confide in General Jackson's integrity and patriotism. The question of the Vice-President alone remained to be settled, Jackson's elected by some, "but versus," the people said, "endeavor to re-elect for the Vice-President a statesman, distinguished for talents, political honesty and other indispensable requisites for that responsible station." There were two prominent names before the people—Barbour, of Virginia, and Martin Van Buren, of New York. Between these two individuals the people had to make a choice; and in the re-election was undivided not only their present interest but their future destiny. If Van Buren should be elected he would be at the threshold of his ambitions, he would then in all probability become President to the exclusion of many distinguished citizens. Van Buren had no identity with the citizens of Edgecombe, he had assisted to oppress them by advocating and voting for the tariff of 1828. In this respect he had scattered no blessings in the patriotic regions of the South.

In contrast to Van Buren, Barbour claims were indisputable to the people. He was the pride of Virginia; consequently of North Carolina, and especially Edgecombe. The results of the meeting was a support of Jackson and Barbour. The people forgot that Jackson himself was in the harness with Van Buren, and were desirous to elect him.

The question of State rights again became prominent in the campaign, and Jackson's alliance with Van Buren was the principal cause of the publicity which the movement acquired. Strange to say an element in Edgecombe adhered to Van Buren and supported the policies he advocated even in defiance of the views of the more extreme southerners. A convention was called at Raleigh in 1832 and Joseph R. Loyd was elected as delegate from Edgecombe. It is unnecessary to go into the discussion of the convention. Loyd remained quiet during the debate until Mr. Obrien from Granville County stated the grounds on which Van Buren's pretensions to Vice-President were founded. During this discourse Loyd was awakened and with all that eloquence with which he was master, he set forth his views, rather than the opinion of his fellow-citizens at home, upon the political issue.



Lloyd began by saying that North Carolina came into the Union cautiously; she was one of the last to adopt the Constitution, and would be one of the last to desert the Union. "The people of this State and county," he said, "are not prepared to go into extremities." This was the first meeting which had been called to express the feelings on the critical state of the county. The people preferred this opportunity of voicing to settle the confusion, because it could be done in a mild and constructive manner. They preferred to do it by showing that they would advance no man to office whose opinions were adverse to the interests of the Southern States. Lloyd could not have expressed his feelings on this subject better than by voting in favor of Barbour in preference to Van Buren. In doing so he exerted his influence to put down a man who had supported the tariff system. The main point of the whole campaign was to do away with the party's power until the national debt was paid.

At the same hour that the convention was being addressed by Lloyd, a Van Buren meeting was held in Edgecombe where all the Van Buren followers gathered with Barbour's supporters. The meeting was addressed by several speakers, after which resolutions approbatory of Phillip P. Barbour were offered and the ayes and noes taken. It soon became apparent that the friends of Barbour would be unsuccessful in passing the resolutions, and they offered a polite invitation to the Van Buren men to retire. They contended that the meeting was an anti-Van Buren meeting, and that the Van Buren men had no authority to be there. The Van Buren men submissively retired, leaving behind the Barbour men and neutrals.

After the anti-Van Buren meeting adjourned, the Van Buren men reassembled in the court house. The meeting was addressed by Louis D. Wilson, R. R. Hines, and Moses Baker. The Van Buren faction remained unanimous with the anti-Van Buren faction, however, on the President, but expressed the highest confidence in Martin P. Van Buren as a politician of true Democratic principals.

In the meantime the Whig element made its first appearance in the county. The Whigs constituted the party which became opposed to Jackson in 1834. Mature men who favored Adams as a general rule also allied themselves with the Whig party. The



entry of this party into politics at Edgecombe came after the defeat of Van Buren followers. They took the issue of opposition to all progressive movements as a platform upon which to solicit recognition from their fellow-citizens. The first opposition made against any of these movements was the fight they lodged against the railroads and theology.

The Whigs in advocating their freedom as an issue for politics stayed the progress of industry in so far as lay in their power. Whigery of the county, in its enlightened democracy with sleepless vigilance, retarded the movement of all internal improvements and ignored every attempt to carry out any project that tended to increase taxation. An issue of this nature was sure to find several enthusiastic supporters in Edgecombe, for it is plainly evident that the politicians had always fought against any system which would increase taxation. For this reason vehement protests were not lacking when the railroad project was just inaugurated in North Carolina. The fact also that the Whigs opposed theological schools shows that the popularity of the movement was one of the cardinal principles which actuated the party in its adoption of the platform.

In the *Tarboro Free Press*, October 25, 1833, an article appeared, issued by the Whigs of that vicinity, versus the incorporation of theological schools. It was addressed to the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina. It was very easy to see that a religious creed of a partisan became mixed with his politics in this opposition. Two petitions were before the General Assembly at the session 1833 for incorporation of two theological schools. The Whigs and sectarian writers claimed that the incorporation of same would be an abuse of power, and the end of such corporations a subversion of the rights of both civil and religious liberty. The legislature might, the writer asserted, as well incorporate churches as incorporate theological schools, and might as well legislate on the doctrine of religion or on the ordinances or on the duties of religion, as on the ministry of religion. The right that gives the one, gives the other, or the same power that could do that could do the other, for nothing stood nearer related and more connected with religion than that of the ministry, for without it, would there have been a state of religion? It was obvious that the Whigs had an argument, and the legislature had

no precedent to act upon; the law producing religion in a technical sense. Would not the theological schools produce religious laws in the end? This was the issue laid before the legislature by the Whigs. The strife became bitter with a theological discussion among various politicians and the church people of the county. It finally culminated into a church and State affair, and was instrumental in getting many from the Whig party and church. The Whigs secured the public sentiment primarily from the results of taxation in case the schools were incorporated. A writer, commenting later on this subject and the progress in the county, said: "It's the priests' hope to get dominion over the public mind and command of the purses of our people by means of theological schools incorporations. The Whigs of Edgcombe hesitate not to investigate the designs and dangers which he concealed under their *speeches*, beginning of authority, plunder and put the people of the legislature on their guard."

The quick rallying around the Whig banner and the opposition of the Republicans, changed the tone of politics in the county, and caused a support to be given to the national Democratic candidate. The increase of votes for the Whig party in Edgcombe grew firm in the year 1834, when Democratic votes totaled 1,395 votes for candidates to Congress, and 1,320 votes for Dr. Hall in 1836. Mr. Pettigrew, the Whig candidate, received 75 votes. Dr. Hall, the election previous to this, had received only 1,091 votes and with no opposition. In spite of this overwhelming vote for Dr. Hall in 1836, Mr. Pettigrew was elected to represent this district in Congress. This clearly indicates the spontaneous rise of Whig influence in the eastern counties of the State. In addition to this the anti-Jackson element in Edgcombe, which had openly declared for the Whig party, had grown considerably stronger, and the district gave seven anti-Jackson members to the General Assembly, whereas the Jackson party gave only eleven.

In 1836 when the split finally culminated between the Jackson and Van Buren element, the Whigs were given additional strength. In spite of the fact that Edgcombe gave the largest Van Buren majority of any county in the State—1,175 votes—the Whig party had gained more than 30 per cent more votes than in the previous local election. The Democrats had lost more than 255 votes since

the year 1835. The ancient party, however, remained firm, consistent, and unshaken in her principles and unbroken in her democracy.

The following year more enthusiasm existed in county than in its previous history. The Democratic party saw, with jealous eye, the rapid encroachment upon the virgin soil of democracy by the Whigs. The Whig convention met in Washington, N. C., for the district, on the 7th of April, 1837. Josiah Collens, of Washington, was nominated for the Whig candidate for Congress. The fermenting of the Whig machinery elicited recognition and immediate action on the part of the Democrats. The next day a large meeting was held at Captain W. Y. Bullock's in Edgecombe.

The following is an extract of the Democratic fight versus the Whigs from the *Tarboro Free Press*:

"On the 8th day of April, 1837, Robert Barnes was called to the chair, and David G. Baker, Esq., was appointed secretary. Benjamin R. Hines, Thomas J. Bullock, Dr. J. J. Daniels, and David G. Baker were appointed a committee to draft resolutions expressive of the sentiments of the meeting.

"After having retired a short time the committee reported the following resolutions, which, on motion of B. R. Hines, were read by Dr. J. J. Daniels, who advocated them in a strenuous but brief manner, and was followed by B. R. Hines, who also advocated their adoption:

"WHEREAS, The people have the constitutional right to assemble together for the purpose of taking into consideration the political condition of our country, and to consult each other, as to the mode the most propitious for the perpetuation of our liberties and rights: and whereas, a time has arrived the most momentous that has ever existed since the organization of our Government, which certainly calls loudly for a full expression of opinion individually and collectively. We, a portion of the Democratic citizens of Edgecombe County, N. C., who have met together in conformity with such rights, do think it essentially requisite to adopt the following resolutions:

"Resolved, That we believe that efforts are making by the advocates of modern Whigism and vicious fanaticism, to upset our venerated Constitution and our sacred Union; and that it becomes us, as lovers of liberty and advocates of those patriotic principles

so nobly achieved to us by our ancestors, to scorn all attempts of that kind, and use all exertions in our power to prevent such a sad catastrophe.

*"Resolved,* That we believe it to be essentially necessary to the cause of democracy and liberty, to present an undivided front in support of a Democratic candidate to represent this Congressional district No. 3, or else our cause so pure and so sacred must be defeated.

*"Resolved,* That the long experience of the Honorable Thomas H. Hall, as well as his firm, able, independent and consistent course, so often verified in the national legislature, entitle him to our confidence and should ensure him the support of the Democratic party throughout the district.

*"Resolved,* That we feel disposed to support him in preference to any other individual in the district, and earnestly request the Democratic party to unite with us in a cause so noble and so essentially requisite for the cause of liberty and the Constitution.

*"Resolved,* That our reluctance to give him up for any other individual induces us to positively give him our undivided support, should we not obviously see that our cause of democracy must be defeated by so doing.

*"Resolved,* That his claims to the office are undoubted, and justice to our cause as well as his consistent and able course heretofore so ably manifested, forbid us doing otherwise than putting him in nomination."

The above preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted.

A. committee of four individuals was appointed to inform Dr. Hall of his nomination and request him to say whether or not he would serve the people if elected, or whether the nomination met with his acceptance.

In the meantime disagreements arose over the advisability of running Dr. Hall as the Republican candidate for Senate. Dr. Hall acted with decorum in the matter, and not wishing to impair the influence and strength of the party by causing a split wrote the *Tarboro Free Press*, May 13, 1837, that since his name had been placed before the district as a candidate for office, he found that many respectable members of the party would have preferred some other. Naturally Dr. Hall saw that the unity of feeling would not exist and that this desirable effect must be



prevalent if the Republicans were to defeat the Whigs. Dr. Hall accordingly withdrew his name in a most gentlemanly manner, and that without engendering any degree of ill will toward the party and all concerned. This is one of the marked greatnesses of the man, who for more than a decade so faithfully represented Edgecombe in Congress, and in other important civil and political capacities.

After Dr. Hall's withdrawal only one prospective candidate remained, namely, Louis D. Wilson. Wilson was then gaining ascendancy in the opinion of the people, and his influence was working an impression upon the district as well. He was well in his prime and almost in the zenith of his political power. He had been the choice of the people in 1835, with Phesanton Suggs to represent Edgecombe in the convention of that year. He took an active part in amending the Constituion in the respect of depriving free negroes and mulattoes under forty years of age to vote for members of the Senate and Congress. With his political insight and his acquisition of thought and action he gained many new supporters in this campaign.

President Van Buren inherited from Jackson a great trouble and no less problem in the dying struggle of the United States Bank. In the contest between the Whigs and Democrats this became the absorbing issue. That the public weal and the interests of the many unsuspecting and innocent people should have to suffer in the intense struggle for political supremacy is one of those sad realities handed down to posterity. The Whigs, in order to retain the foothold already gained by the weakening of the Democratic party, made the opposition to the National Bank their cardinal theme. It seems amazing at this day that men with such ingenuity and foresight like Henry Clay and Daniel Webster should have lent their power and influence to aid in the disastrous scheme.

It presents a gloomy spectacle to witness old Edgecombe in the throes of political incubacy; struggling for party rights, yet ignoring the will of the people. However, the misty pages vanish under the stain of triumphancy, and the end of the campaign told the tale of democracy again instilled in the minds of many, and Whiggery maintaining her meager hold. Louis D. Wilson secured



1,167 votes versus Edward Stanley's 78 in the county. At the same time, however, there appeared a restlessness prevalent among the voters in the county. There was an urgent need to have a mutual understanding with prospective legislation to change or repeal the county law electing clerks for the County and Superior Courts, sheriffs and constable. The old systems were considered more convenient—that is, the appointment of such officers as were named by the courts. The promise of party spoils, however inviting, was never successful in persuading the people or politicians of the practicability of such a scheme.

Amid the bitter controversy of the Whigs and Democrats over the bank and the tariff, the "hideous spectre," of even a more dreadful issue was continually appearing to the front. The question of slavery, which many had hoped was forever settled in 1920, was fast being revived by the Whigs, and far from solution. The unfurling of the Republican banner in 1839 was a movement beguiled by the deceptive pretext of Federalism under a modern Whig garb. An alliance between the Federalists and Whigs gave the new party control over county politics in 1839 and 1840. Edward Stanley, Whig, had represented the district in Congress for three successive years. In addition local politics was gradually passing from the Democrats to the Whigs. To add further to the complication and embarrassment of the Democratic party a farmer's ticket came out in 1840. This caused an additional decline of the Democratic party. There were accordingly three tickets. The Democrats, who supported R. M. Sanders for Governor; Louis D. Wilson, Senate; William S. Baker and Joshua Barnes, House of Congress, and M. Petway for Sheriff. The farmers' ticket supported the same candidates for President and Vice-President, Governor, Sheriff, but ran W. L. Kennedy for Senate. The Federal Whigs of course supported Tyler, Harrison, and Edward Stanley, of Beaufort, for Senate.

The canvass for the campaign began with what promised to be a rampant contest. The fervor elicited some witty and appropriate remarks and writings on the issues of the day. One cotton victim who received reverses from an emotional as well as financial

consideration, contributed a poem to be used against the Whigs. It is well worth quoting as an index to the issues then prevalent:

“Nought but these plagues of dreadful destruction,  
Distract us with fears of woeful reduction.  
Corn groans beneath the oppression of bugs,  
Harrison swaggers with ‘hard cider’ in mugs;  
Indians are cutting the throats of the whites.  
Northern men brawling for ‘nigger’ men’s rights.  
Congress bullying and butchering each other,  
Honest men claiming the rogue for their brother;  
Banks buying up every freeman they can,  
(Undermining the Republican Van);  
Grinding all men who’re disposed to be free—  
Such is the history of the time that be.”

The Democrats fought bravely, but unsuccessfully, in defense of their policies. The Whigs in the national contest won the laurels for which they had struggled so faithfully to obtain. In local affairs, however, the Democrats were successful and managed to elect Charles G. Hunter, of Edgecombe, as Democrat delegate to the convention at Baltimore, H. T. Clark as clerk of Court, William S. Baker and Joshua Barnes as Representative to State Legislature, William Petway as Sheriff, and Louis D. Wilson as Senator, and polled 1,379 votes for Van Buren versus 135 Whig votes for Harrison.

By the fall of 1841, after the apparent Whig victory in Edgecombe, the Democrats rallied back to their own colors. The Democratic committee met after the election and appointed another committee to get up resolutions, defending the Democratic principles and the county’s integrity. The meeting was held at the court house November 23, 1841. J. C. Knight acted as chairman and George Howard, secretary. T. R. Purnell outlined in a speech the artifices and deceptions as the Democratic party saw them practiced by the Whigs during the last victory. He pronounced the Whig party “dead, dead, dead.” Moreover charges of abusing public confidence was charged to the Whig leaders. The Democratic party depended upon the sober thoughts of the people in the county to cause them to rally back to the support of Democratic principles as taught by Jefferson, Jackson, and

Van Buren. The Whigs had secured their ends in the bank question inasmuch as the President had failed to veto their measure. For this act the Edgcombe Democrats were not slow in acknowledging their appreciation. The party did not, as was charged against them, guard money more excessively than the Republicans had. They at least got more credit by the paper money party than they actually wanted. The death of Harrison, April 4, 1841, and the succession to the presidency by John Tyler, an ardent Democrat, caused great consternation to the Whigs and much rejoicing to the Democrats. A more prospective future loomed up for local democracy, and the campaign for 1841 for the election of Congressman was one of interest. Never did Democrats seem actuated by a more resolute and determined spirit. The boastings, the taunts, the sneers of their opponents only appeared to have a tendency to make them adhere more unflinchingly to the men of their choice and the Republican doctrine they advocated. This determination and the preparation made to offset the Whigs caused a prominent Whig voter to declare that the Democrats would only receive the support of the State of New Hampshire and the County of Edgcombe.

The Republicans of Edgcombe and Nash gave a public dinner at Nolley's X Roads in Edgcombe, 15th of October. Several prominent speakers were present and some rank Republican doctrines were promulgated. John P. Pitt, then an active politician, presided over the gathering, and George Howard acted as secretary. H. T. Clark, Ralph E. McNair, Harman Ward, Robt. D. Hart, and Charles G. Hunter were appointed to draft resolutions expressive of the sentiment of those present.

The committee having retired, the meeting was addressed at some length by J. J. Pippen, touching the merits of the respective candidates for the presidency; urging the necessity of vigilance and exertion on the part of the democracy, "to counteract the efforts of our opponents; inducing their neighbors to attend the polls."

The committee returned, whereupon H. T. Clark, in behalf of the committee, reported the following preamble and resolutions, prefacing the same with appropriate remarks. The resolutions were read collectively and separately, and unanimously adopted:

"WHEREAS, The zeal and unexampled effort now made by the opposition to thwart the operations of the Government, to oppose

the principles of the Republican party by perverting its doctrines, misrepresenting facts, and raising a public clamor by the most bitter and malicious denunciations of men and measures connected with the present administration, call for renewed and vigorous efforts of the democracy to sustain themselves and the precious principles handed down to them by the forefathers.

*“Resolved,* That a committee of twelve be appointed by the meeting, to be a committee of vigilance, who shall take the necessary steps to promote the cause of the Democratic party, and secure a full vote at the polls, and to distribute such papers and documents as may tend to advance our cause.

*“Resolved,* That we have confidence in the Republican doctrines of the present administration, and think the welfare and prosperity of the county depend upon their successful maintenance.

*“Resolved,* That we view with much alarm and concern, the union of Whigism and abolitionism at the North; while our present President stands pledged to vote any interference with our domestic institutions from the fanatic abolitionists. General Harrison is ominously silent on it—and the Whig party at the North have pursued such a course on this subject that no southern man should trust them with power.

*“Resolved,* That we feel grateful for the firm and manly stand assumed by northern democracy in favor of southern rights and the Constitution, and while we sympathize with those who have been sacrificed for their course on this subject, we feel indignant at the boastings of southern Whigs for the success of northern Whigs who are avowed abolitionists.

*“Resolved,* That the independent treasury bill, delivering us from the unholy alliance of corporations and the money power, is the plain interpretation of the Constitution and the true policy of the Government as marked out by our forefathers, and should be the uncompromising creed of the Democratic party.”

The beginning of this campaign marked a sad omen which was not eliminated until 1847. The strategy exercised by the Whigs in supporting H. I. Toole, a Democrat in principle, caused suspicion to be cast upon him, and he was doomed to suffer for honest



principles. This is not the first time a man was defeated by the wrong kind of support and at the hands of superfluous flattery.

Moreover, Toole became involved in an opposition with his personal friend, H. S. Clark. The convention placed Clark in order of nomination and under this condition nothing remained but for Toole to run as an independent candidate or withdraw with a loss of prestige. The Whigs were elated over the defeat of Toole in the convention, because he had been their greatest foe. In the election previous to this he had secured 841 votes in the county versus that of 80 for Stanley, the Whig candidate. In order to celebrate their feelings a cannon was fired in front of the market square in Tarboro when the news reached the street from the closed doors of the convention hall. The result was he ran as a mere choice of the people. The Tarboro people felt under obligations to support the nominee of the convention, and, as usual with political organizations, began to hurl its invectives toward Toole, and painting Clark up in brilliant colors. Both men were equal in character and ability. However, one was a victim of circumstances and the other a supporter of political machinery.

Toole was so severely abused by the Democrats, although a Democrat himself, that he ordered his paper sent directly to him instead of his home, in order that his family might not be pained at the abuse against him. An article had appeared in the *Tarboro Press*, signed "A. B.," in which Toole was defended of his principles and why the Whigs were supporting him. George Howard, then editor of the *Tarboro Free Press*, commented in as mild a form as his position would admit and gave cause for further correspondence upon the issue. Accordingly a prominent writer in Tarboro, in making use of the opportunity to harass Toole further, wrote a scathing rejoinder. He thought that Howard had missed the mark in attributing the authorship of "A. B." in the paper to a Whig in Tarboro. The writer then declared that there were certain earmaks about the communication, as well as twenty-three editorials in the same paper, which were strong features of a certain gentleman in Tarboro who calls himself a Democrat (meaning Toole).

The writer proceeded further to show, in a ridiculous light, the workings of the new-fangled coalition. It was indeed queer that



Toole should have been supported by the Whigs when a Democrat and the two parties being so abused to each other. And probably with present limitations of insight to the mistakes made by the parties involved, one should not be too harsh toward either opponent or contestant. Toole's followers at any rate were pictured as a mere corporal's guard (which later proved otherwise), vying with each other in their efforts to promote the cause of the great "Unpacked," "Toole shaking hands with Federalism," was the picture of ignominious regret. Federalism defending Toole was a unique cause for suspicion of any man claiming Democratic principles. This was of course an unnatural alliance; and unholy union. The time was, and it came to pass soon after this predicament was realized by Toole himself, that H. I. Toole would have scorned such an alliance, when his ardent spirit for democracy would have suffered the keenest mortification, ere he would have permitted support from men whose principles he detested. Toole, however, was not willing to remain in his embarrassing position. Rather than be supported by Whigs and to suffer the Democratic party, the one for which he had fought and loved, to be impaired, he sacrificed the race and withdrew. Richard S. Donnell, of Craven County, became the Whig nominee for Congress in opposition to Clark, after Toole's withdrawal. In this instance Clark did not play the ungentlemanly part. He immediately proposed in a letter to Toole that he also, in order to secure the harmony for the success of the Democratic party, would withdraw from the race on certain proposals, namely, that some other individual be selected or agreed upon, and that both he and Toole support such individual.

Toole in the meantime had given Clark's proposal consideration, and the reaction of his own mind again forced him to reinstate himself in the eyes of his supporters for the seat in Congress. He accordingly wrote Clark, May 5th, and informed him that since his withdrawal he had advised with his friends, and he nor they considered the harmony of the Democratic party endangered by the present conditions of things—both claimed to be Democrats—since if either were elected (and it was certain that one would be), a Democrat would be secured. In this event Toole reconsidered his withdrawal, and proposed to Clark both run as candidates. There remained nothing else to do, and the race began.

Immediately after his declaration that he was again in the field a dialogue between a Town Whig and a Country Democrat, which was supposed to have taken place at X Roads Meeting House, was published in the *Tarboro Press*. The words "town" and "country" were used profusely to convey a supposed idea that the town was superior over the country, and the country man was to beat in the conversation. This was to cast reflection upon Toole. The dialogue is as follows:

Whig (with a hat full of Toole's circulars, all copied from the *North State Whig*): Good morning, 'Squire. How do ye do today?

Democrat: Thank you, tolerable—how's it with yourself?

Whig: Joster so so. Well, 'Squire, who do you go for, for Congress?

Democrat: I go for the nominee of the convention.

Whig: You do? Why he's a Whig, "as good a Whig as I want."

Democrat: He is? Well, why don't you go for him? You profess to be a Whig.

Whig: I would go for him, but "I have pledged myself to go for Toole."

Democrat: You have? Then I "pledge myself to go for the nominee."

"It is needless to say that the Whig (Coon) was fairly 'treed,' and didn't say anything more."

The results of the election demonstrated that Toole had not lost favor entirely in the people's estimation. His contribution to the policies of the Democratic party even though clothed (as some Democrats declared) in a Whig garb was remembered in the most stringent and undue crisis of his political career. These ideals cherished by the voters in the county were manifested on the day of the election. Edgecombe gave Toole the majority of votes, but the other counties went against him. Because of the split among all parties only 52 votes were necessary to a choice, and Toole lacked only eight. Had Beaufort County gone for him he would have won; but by skillful jockeying her vote was secured for Clark by a majority of one.

In the meantime Whiggery had continued to gain in power and in numbers. The Federal Whig convention in Raleigh, in April, 1842, gave Edgecombe another opportunity for display of numerical increase. R. H. Battle, Dr. L. J. Dortch, C. C. Battle, B. D. Battle, and William A. Pone were sent from the county as Edgecombe representatives. Edgecombe, however, grew less and less in sympathy with one of the principal Whig leaders, Stanley, in the district. They charged him with corruption, allowing himself \$53.00 too much in expenditures and voting for the tariff. It is true that Congress in 1842 passed a high tariff law, based and passed on the assumption of protecting the manufacturers. Edward Stanley was the only member from North Carolina, Whig or Democrat, who voted for the measure. Naturally this did not appeal to North Carolina and Edgecombe. The poor men of Edgecombe were then paying upon the necessities of life the high tax imposed by the Whig party. Stanley went to Stantonburg, August, 1843, on an electioneering tour. While there he was attacked in a speech by William Norflet, who laid charges against him for his political association with abolitionists, his support of high tariff, and protection. These charges were laid as a basis for the election of 1844, and constituted the unfurling of the political events until the outbreak of the War between the States.

With the admission of Clay in the political ring the issues of slavery and tariff became revived and dominated politically for over twenty years. It is a darkened and gloomy phase of political history, but none the less one worthy for complete understanding. No phase of history is more interesting than to observe the movement of politicians; the unraveling of forces which later clashed in arms for political dominion. Politics was the one excitement of the day, and actuated men to impulses as blinding and misleading as they were noble and spectacular. In the gathering of the clouds of conflict dwindling of parties is seen, and alliances and friendship destroyed. In their place is found the rise of new parties, new alliances, and new entanglements.

Preliminary to the campaign of 1844 the Whigs and Democrats, as their custom was, began having meetings and barbecues. They, moreover, began forming organizations for the campaign. A regular Democratic Association was organized in the Fifteenth District, with May Cherry as president and John F. Speight,

secretary; both from Edgecombe. A preamble was immediately formed; whereas, the democracy of Edgecombe did proclaim its unaltered attachment to the principles of the Democratic creed. With this firm determination, promise was made to do battle in the November election to defeat Clay and the combined force of Federalism. At this time Clay himself was carrying on a pompous parade through the State, and was securing great acclamations. He visited the "State" of Edgecombe, as he termed it, in his introductory remarks. The Democrats sought to play a trick upon him. The cars stopped at Joyners Depot, where a crowd, entirely Democratic, assembled to hear him. After the cars began to move off Clay stood on the platform and shouted at the top of his voice: "Go on, gentlemen, you are engaged in a noble cause and must triumph." In a few moments the party was out of sight, and the crowd made the atmosphere ring with laughter because of the blunder of the Whig candidate.

At this meeting Toole was appointed to canvass the Fifteenth District as elector for Polk. The names of R. R. Bridges and James S. Battle were also recommended as suitable persons to represent the county in the House of Congress. Wilson was favored for the Senate, Petway for sheriff, and Hoke for Governor.

In the meantime the Whigs were not sitting idly by. A Whig central convention was organized and confidential circular letters were issued, threatening a revolution if Polk and Dallas were elected. This letter was signed by Richard Hines (a member of Congress from Edgecombe, 1827), and other prominent men. It fell into the hands of the Democrats and was published in the *Tarboro Free Press* as threat to upset the unity of the State. Great exactions were employed to remove the obvious insult cast upon the country, and pleas were issued to resent the lofty crest, flashing eye, and shake of "Coondum" with a real vote for Polk and Dallas.

The Whig convention denounced Edgecombe with special emphasis, intimating she would give a thousand illegal votes in the approaching election. This marked the first fall of Whig power in the county, and showed an approaching sign of weakness. Following these declarations the Whigs recommended the appointment of various Whigs to be stationed at the polls to prevent a stuffed ballot. This naturally aroused the indignation of the



Democrats, and they prepared to rebuke the assailants of their reputation. Though Edgecombe has been often calumniated for her political consistency and unanimity in irresponsible newspaper articles, she now for the first time found responsible endorsers.

The Whigs having some 8,000 majority in the State could reason a defeat only by a fraud and forgery in the Democratic party. In this fraud it was considered to be without redress or remedy, and it could be done with impunity, such being the prospects of democracy.

Toole addressed the people in Tarboro immediately after this controversy and gave the origin of the parties in the county. H. Ferdinand Harris replied in a Whig discourse, but was hissed down by the Democrats. Later, newspaper battles began and the issues of both parties were made plain. The tariff issue was again revived, and Harris stated that goods were cheaper since the passage of the tariff act of 1842 than they were during the compromise act when duties were at a minimum rate. This Toole contradicted.

The Democratic party in Edgecombe has ever been opposed to the doctrine of protection, and have always stood pledged to reduce the tariff to a revenue standard to meet the expense of the Government; economically administered. Consequently they were never pledged to any particular bill, but were opposed to the system of minimum and specific duties of 1846, as deceptive and fraudulent in their operations.

This was practically the argument of the party. Assisting Toole in the promulgation of Democratic ideals were John Norfleet, H. T. Clark, Elias Carr, W. M. Norfleet, and William T. Harvey. Who could stand such a Democratic charge, and who could sympathize with a conqueror over so many brilliant enemies?

The Democratic creed embraced, as has been intimated, a separation of the Government from the banks, opposition to old tariff and taxes, except such as were laid for revenue and the necessary expenses of the Government; opposition to any distribution of public money, opposition to all repudiation of honest debts by the bankrupt laws of the general Government or by the State Legislature in public expenditures, and a firm belief in states rights.

On the celebration of the fifty-seventh anniversary of American Independence a huge mass of citizens of Edgecombe met in speak-



ing and feasting. Several toasts were made on the occasion, which emphasized the growing importance of the States rights issue. James W. Clark presided over the meeting after just having resigned the office as first clerk of the navy. There was much wrangling over his act by the Whigs, as a resignation was so rare in that day of rotation. But Clark resigned, as he stated, not for political purposes, but had resigned from motives purely of a private nature.

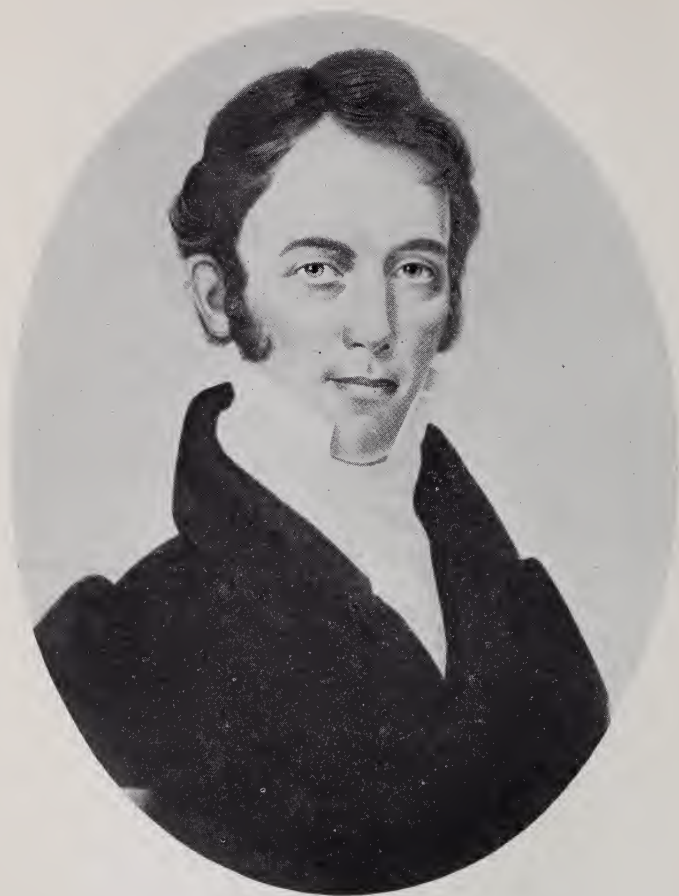
Dr. Hall being indisposed was absent, but sent the following toast of Edgcombe's stand in politics: "The sovereignty of the states, the sovereignty of the people, who compose the states—having never alienated they still retain it. The powers of Congress and State Legislature, being only delegated are of necessity subdivided and not sovereign power."

It appears also that while there were States rights men, there were also men who were anxious for the union and its safety. The question of the Union had been often discussed prior to this date. George Howard, however, at the same meeting and following Dr. Hall's toast, offered the following sentiment: "Liberty—who will part with it? Union—who can calculate its value? May the people of this United States never be called upon to choose between them." Little did he know that in 1861 he would assist in destroying the Union temporarily, and less still in the trying days of 1866-1880 assist in its perpetuation.

The election of 1844 came off quietly considering the feverish campaign which had been waged. The county gave a majority of 1,377 votes for Polk as President, an increase in Democratic votes of 85; and 13 more votes than had been previously given in the county. L. D. Wilson was elected to Senate, Joshua Barnes and R. R. Bridges to House of Commons. W. D. Petway was elected sheriff, and the county gave 1,410 votes for Hoke as Governor versus 718 for Graham, the Whig candidate. The Democrats, therefore, received the first complete victory for several years. With the triumph of Polk and Dallas, and the defeat of Henry Clay, much rejoicing was witnessed and experienced in the county.

Immediately after the campaign and election of 1844, the field of politics became open for the election of congressman. Arrington, of Nash, and Toole, of Edgcombe, became the successful nominees for the election. The citizens on Fishing Creek were





GEN. LOUIS D. WILSON

notable Whigs, and greatly opposed Toole, hating him, as the *Free Press* told it, worse than the "Devil did holy water." The Whigs were demoralized by the recent election and did not know which candidate to support. Arrington was weak and his friends admitted it. Toole had considerable talents for doing them damage and ought not to be placed where he could cause an unrelenting and indictive warfare upon them. Both being Deemocrats, however, a choice had to be made between the two, since no Whig candidate was available. Consequently they took the lesser of the two evils and supported Arrington, who was accordingly elected.

In the meantime party politics became intermingled with the clamor for war with Mexico. In this realm of activities Edgecombe played no inconspicuous part. The center of the history from 1846 until 1848 clung around one noble and amiable character, Louis D. Wilson. His name should instill in every Edgecombe son, the noble attribute which actuated this unselfish man to his patriotic duty.

The beginning of 1846 were days of preparation for the fast approaching war with Mexico. Before the spring had gone the conflict had begun on the Rio Grande, and volunteers were offering their services to the Federal Government. Edgecombe, for some reason, was slow to offer its services for the war. Louis D. Wilson was a member of the Senate at this time. Feeling the askance of mind and that day's touch of shame for his native county, Wilson presented a scene which is unparalleled in local history. With wonderful grace and touching dignity this venerable man, with his flowing locks, rose and addressed the Senate with a farewell address. He asked for permission to visit his county and fellow-citizens, and there awaken them to duty and consciousness. The scene in the Senate was the most thrilling and effective. Senators without party distinction gathered around him and gave him a cordial farewell. Every heart was full, Whig and Democrats vied with each other in demonstration of affectionate approbation and regard. Tears trickled down the cheeks of the senator from Haywood when he arose, and reported a series of complimentary resolutions which were unanimously adopted.

Wilson had given the freshness of his youth and manhood to the service of the State in its legislative halls, and now in the noon of life he went forward at his country's call to fight its

battles in a distant land. Could a man be more noble, more patriotic, to unselfishly do a work not even required or expected of him to do? Senator Wilson left Raleigh January 1, 1846, and arrived home the next day. The patriotic zeal of the man kindled enthusiasm in the hearts of his fellow-citizens, and by the 6th of January a host of volunteers of the county met at Toisnot Depot to partake of a dinner and arrange plans prior to their departure. L. D. Wilson, then appointed captain, addressed them in a strong manner, exhibiting a firm determination on his part to go ahead in his arduous undertaking. They were also addressed by Lieutenant Pender, another noble son of Edgecombe, who was destined to give his life, along with General Wilson, in this last service for his country. On Thursday morning a number of 150 men departed for Wilmington for mobilization and training.

On the 23d of January two more regiments were mustered in the county. More than one hundred men stepped forward in one day to volunteer their services. The writer wishes it were convenient to give the roster of all the troops, but the names of the officers will have to suffice. Louis D. Wilson was made captain; William S. Dugger, first lieutenant; William H. Moyer and Josiah S. Pender, second lieutenants; George W. Barnes, first sergeant; Robert Pitt, second sergeant; Hardy C. Dixon, third sergeant; James J. Williams, fourth sergeant; Benjamin G. Brantwell, first corporal; Weldon S. Hunter, second corporal; Jethro D. Battle, third corporal; and Elisha Abrams, fourth corporal.<sup>1</sup> All of these men in the group, which later constituted several companies, were from Edgecombe except one from Pitt and one from Franklin County.

The month of January was a proud one for old Edgecombe. The ladies of the county with commendable patriotism prepared appropriate banners for the volunteers and set apart the 18th for presentations. Miss Sarah E. Howard, in behalf of the women, delivered the address. Captain Wilson, having been notified, was present, accompanied by Lieutenant Staton and Corporal Abram. A large crowd of citizens from town and county witnessed the ceremony. At one o'clock a signal gun was fired, and Miss Howard

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<sup>1</sup> When the volunteers arrived in Mexico changes were made in the companies and promotions were made.



appeared to give her address. She was accompanied by Misses Foxhall and Lawrence. The address is as follows:

“CAPTAIN WILSON:—To you, as the representative of the Edgecombe volunteers, I am deputed by the ladies of the county to present the flag which I hold. Appreciating the heroism which has impelled you at the call of your country to rush to her standard, and that self-sacrificing spirit, which when patriotism demands, forget the comforts of home and ties of kindred, to peril life and fortune in the tented field; we have wrought with our hands a banner for the volunteers, hoping that its presence may urge them forward amid the hardships of the camp, and restrain them in the hour of victory.

“Whilst the weakness of our sex forbids us to encounter the fatigues and privations of war, it has always been deemed appropriate that women should cheer on the soldier to the field. In this we but emulate the example of the maidens and matrons of the Revolution, that Revolution which established those political liberties and conferred those social benefits, to secure which you have volunteered. Your fathers waged war against the haughty Britons, and the Lion of England has twice crouched before the Eagle of our country. You are now engaged in a contest with the perfidious Mexicans, and the flag of '76 is the flag of '46. The same national emblem which waved over your ancestors now wave over you. The same glorious eagle which witnessed the death of the gallant Colonel Irwin, of Edgecombe, when he fell at the head of his regiment on the bloody field of Germantown, will follow you with his bold unwinking gaze to the mountains and valleys of Mexico. The same glorious stars and stripes which beamed over Saratoga and Monmouth, Kings Mountain, and Camden, will beam over you.

“The honor of North Carolina is in part entrusted to your care: that State which was the first in '76 to brave the wrath of the British lion; and which, if the clouds of adversity shall ever overtake our institutions, will be prepared to furnish the forlorn hope for freedom's farewell fight. More especially is the honor of Edgecombe in your hands. You are our husbands, our sons, our

brothers, our friends. You have enlisted under that proud banner which has been consecrated to the cause of human liberty—the glorious stars and stripes of your country—it is the precious emblem of our noble confederacy of free and independent states, as yet as pure and unsullied as the bosom of a lovely baby. When unfurled to the breeze who of us beholds it without associating with it whatever is brave, whatever is just, whatever is generous. The alacrity which you have displayed in coming forward at the call of your country, forbids all fear that you will be backward in the fight.

“Accept, then, our banner—cherish, protect, and defend it to the death. May it ever be found in the front rank of battle! Where the balls fly thickest and blows fall heaviest. Remember that it is not more the flag of the brave, than the flag of the virtuous; and we implore you, in behalf of our sisters of Mexico, should the fortune of war place them in your power, recollect that a noble courtesy not less than a high courage characterize the true soldier.

“Go; our hearts are with you. Our prayers shall accompany you. Our plaudits shall hail your successes and greet your return. If you fall, our tears will embalm your memories.”

A very appropriate song was composed by the volunteers, and sung during the war. The tune was the one used in singing “Mary Blain”—at that time a very popular song. Some lady with musical talent should revive this song:

“We shoulder our arms,  
And on the way we go:  
To right the wrongs we’ve borne  
So long from Mexico.

#### CHORUS:

“Farewell the hearts to us so dear,  
And the dear girls we leave in pain;  
She’ll not forget her volunteer,  
He’s coming back again.

"We do not fight for money,  
But glory still more dear;  
We'll whip both France and England,  
If they dare to interfere.

"And when the war is over,  
Then Mexico will say,  
She'd rather fight the devil,  
Than the boys who start today.

"Who's not heard of Edgcombe,  
The pride of all the land?  
Her daughters fair have sent from home,  
This brave and gallant band.

"With Wilson for our leader,  
We'll fight like heroes brave;  
We'll either conquer all our foes,  
Or fill the soldier's grave.

"The old North State a mother, too,  
Of more than Roman fame:  
Has sent her sons all brave and true,  
To win a gallant name.

"Then ere we go we bid adieu,  
To all we leave behind;  
Mothers, sisters, sweethearts true,  
We bid you not repine.

"For to a sacred war we go,  
We'll win a glorious name,  
And when returned from Mexico  
You'll share our wealth and fame."

Captain Wilson received the flag with an appropriate speech and returned that night for Wilmington.

The Edgecombe volunteers left Fort Johnson, Smithville, where they had mobilized, February 15, 1847, for Mexico, and took the steamer *U. S. Powell*. They arrived in Santiago, March 7, 1847. The Edgecombe companies were left at Francisco on the Rio Grande about fifteen miles from Canargo. They had seen no active service up to May 22, 1847. While at Canargo the Edgecombe companies suffered more than any other companies in the regiment, and out of the two large organizations only enough men remained to form one good company by July 18, 1847. Captain Exum L. Whitaker, of Edgecombe, Company A, died June 3d, while the same company had lost thirty-two from fever as early as June 3d. Company E had lost twenty men by the same epidemic. Several men died before reaching Canargo. Calvin Johnson, of Company A, died at Matamoras on the 28th of March, while William H. Spence and George W. Barnes died on the boat which was taking the troops to the city. During the month of April Companies A and E had lost from typhoid fever over thirty-nine men. Gethro Battle, one of the volunteers, died before leaving Fort Johnson. He entered his tent one night in apparent good health and was found dead the next morning.

In the meantime Captain Wilson had been raised to the rank of colonel and was preparing a regiment under General Taylor. Late in June the two Edgecombe companies were ordered up the Rio Grande, Wayne Company following five days later. At the Rancho, San Francisco, the Edgecombe companies went aground, fast in the mud, and landed to encamp. The Wayne Company overtook them and all proceeded to Canargo. After landing their cargoes, they went back to San Francisco to reinforce Colonel Wilson because of the excitement and danger along the river. Several men were then on the 'sick list, four being left at Matamoras. Within a few days dysentery, billiousness, diarrhea, and typhoid had become general. Frequently not enough men were available to mount guard. Out of seventy-nine privates in one company only thirty to forty were reported fit for duty for several days. Several were sent to the hospital at Canargo and Matamoras. Several died on the boat going down and were buried at Rancho and La Bolso.

However, the Edgecombe troops arrived just in time. There was considerable excitement when rumors came of the approach of Santa Anna with overwhelming force, and General Taylor with but a remnant of an army left. The arrival of the volunteers at this time was fortunate. The men from Edgecombe soon had an opportunity to give honor to the county and to distinguish themselves.

A letter had been received from Colonel L. D. Wilson, of the Twelfth Infantry, stating that he expected to leave Vera Cruz in command of 850 troops as a guard for a train with supplies for General Scott's army. Should they be molested by the Guerrillas, Colonel Wilson was prepared to give a good account of himself.

In the meantime General Taylor was also making preparation for a move towards San Luis. The rumors about the appointment of commissioners on the part of Mexico to make overtures for peace appeared to be all unfounded; and vigorous preparations were made by the United States administration and army to prosecute the war with renewed energy.

First Lieutenant John S. Pender, commanding Company A, Edgecombe Volunteers, wrote an interesting letter, descriptive of events in Mexico, and gave an index to conditions: "We deeply sympathize with the relatives of those who have fallen victims to disease," wrote Lieutenant Pender, "and hope the day is not distant when the survivors will return home crowned with laurels, and be enabled to recount to anxious hearers their 'hairbreadth' escapes in the tented field. Our people, no doubt, being ever anxious to hear from the 'B'hoys' of the 'Old North State,' more particularly from the 'Edgecombe Wheelhorses,' I have undertaken to give you some information as to our doings and whereabouts.

"The remaining companies of our regiment under command of Colonel Paine (two detachments having advanced a short time previous—Captains Henry Henry and Blalock's to Saltillo; Captain Price and Williamson's and the two Edgecombe companies to Cerralvo, under command of Major Stokes) have left the most odious and disagreeable, I might say fatal place, Canargo. For so it had proved to our regiment. On the 3d of June, enroute for Buena Vista, we were joined by our detachment under Major



Stokes at Cerralvo, and arrived on the 16th of June at General Taylor's camp near Monterey, but four miles distant in a delightful grove of large pecan trees, whose tall and wide-spreading branches afford a delightful shade to the weary travelers, after marching several days over rugged and barren hills, covered with a few little shrubs termed chapparral.

"At the camp of 'Old Rough and Ready' on Walnut Spring, so called from the large pecan trees (being a species of the walnut), is an excellent spring gushing out of the ground in a large and continuous volume of cold and refreshing water, which to us, who having been compelled to drink the San Juan composed of rotten limestone at times as thick as any mud puddle, saturated with the carcasses of cows, mules, etc., that are strewn along the river sometimes two or three together every forty or fifty yards—to us, who instead of drink had found both meat and drink, it was indeed a luxury, and could our good folks have seen us quaffing away at nature's font, they would have taken us for cold-water advocates.

"General Wool is in command of this post, and is wooling the boys considerably in the way of drilling and guard duty; he is considered the strictest disciplinarian in the army, and has expressed the intention of making soldiers of us, and I sincerely believe he will, from the manner in which he has commenced operations. Our regiment is in high favor with him, being the same wherever we have remained, sustaining a high character for its orderly and soldierlike bearing.

"It is considered remarkably healthy here, and the boys are doing quite well; those that have been sick are convalescent, and I am confident that if our regiment, on its arrival in Mexico, could have advanced to this place, we should now number many brave soldiers in our ranks who have fallen victims to the climate of the lower sections of the country, where we remained so long engaged in the noble and glorious business of escorting wagon trains, and after undergoing these hardships and exposure to health and life, to have to content ourselves with the almost certainty of having no fight.

"While on our way up at Rinconarda, a mountain pass where the Mexicans had such a desperate struggle with the Spanish, the success of which secured to them their independence, we were

informed of the vicinity of the enemy, some five thousand strong, and that an attack was certain. We pursued our way after using every precaution to prevent surprise, and it gives me pride to say that I never saw more coolness and courage exhibited on any occasion. We had every reason to believe that we would have a fight, and I am confident our men wish it with a right good will. We received from time to time expresses confirming previous information that the enemy was certainly in our advance and determined to cut us off. I suppose they took the second sober thought and vamoosed, thinking we were not the boys to poke fun at.

"There are various rumors in camp relative to our future movement. It is the opinion of some that we shall advance as far as Paras, there to remain; others anticipate a retrograde movement. It is likewise rumored that this line of operations will be entirely abandoned that a portion of the troops will be ordered to General Scott, the remainder discharged. There are any quantity of rumors among us, and they fly about so thick they keep a fellow continually dodging; though I believe it to be conceded generally that there will be no fighting on this line of operations.

"We unfurled our handsome flag to the breeze on the 4th of July, which attracted much attention from the regiments composing this brigade, it being generally conceded to be the handsomest company banner displayed, and many an eye in our rank was moistened with the unconscious tears while repeating that patriotic and endearing motto, 'Go, our hearts are with you,' 'Presented by the Ladies.' As citizens of Edgecombe, we are determined to do our duty; and in remembrance of her fair daughters defend our banner unto the death—we cherish it and will protect it with our heart's blood.

"Lieutenant William H. Moyer has resigned on account of his very bad health, being advised so to do by all of his friends. His place cannot be easily filled, having performed every duty with promptness. I am now the only commissioned officer in the company, that is on company duty. Lieutenant Buck being adjutant, has but little or nothing to do with the company; his time being consumed in business appertaining to the regiment.

"Colonel Fagg arrived here about a week ago with the Buncombe boys—they are fine looking men and are quite an acquisition to the regiment."

Lieutenant Pender concluded his letter with the melancholy duty of giving the names and dates of the death of those in the Edgcombe companies, who had fallen victims to the climate. The list included the following names:

COMPANY A:—Jethro D. Battle, Calvin Johnson, George W. Barnes, Amos Edwards, William H. Spencer, Littleton T. Griffin, William Parker, H. M. G. Worsley, Jackson Rodgers, Thomas Wiggins, Joel D. Braswell, Reuben Harrell, William Edwards, Jergen Schultz, William Abrams, Dempsey Hicks, Henry Bell, William W. Amason, Benjamin G. Little, William Tanner, Richard Daniel, and Evans Watson.

COMPANY E:—Gideon Barnhill, J. J. F. Stokes, Wright Darden, Ephraim Flora, Patrick Hardy, Hardy G. L. Calhoun, Samuel Wren, William Griffin, James L. Barnes, Joseph Proctor, George Lowe, Guilford Joyner, John Cornish, Redding Flora, John Taylor, and Wright Griffin.

In the meantime internal troubles were beginning to embarrass Lieutenant Pender and others over the harshness of his commanding officer, Colonel Paine, regarding the election of officers for Company A. A letter from an officer in the North Carolina Regiment, dated October 1st, said that the regiment was in excellent health, and was doing better than it had since it reached Mexico. Colonel Paine had sent in his resignation to General Wool due to difficulties encountered with Lieutenants Pender and Singletary, but the latter had replied that he would receive no resignations, unaccompanied by the surgeon's certificate. Colonel Paine had little or nothing to do with the regiment. "He has no doubt seen his error," said the writer, "and is repenting."

Lieutenant Pender was educated at West Point, and up to the period of the departure of the troops for Mexico was reputed as being the best tactician of the regiment; and no doubt possessed more military knowledge than Paine, who was recruited from civil life. He left as lieutenant in A Company (First Edgcombe), of which Colonel Wilson was then captain. The resignation of Captain Wilson, death of Lieutenant Moyer, and the election of Lieutenant Buck to the adjutancy, left Lieutenant Pender in sole command of Company A. In addition to his superior military qualities, he was endowed with refined feelings which endeared him to his men, most of whom were young and eager to distinguish themselves in the service of their country.

Lieutenant Pender, burdened with the extra duties, had repeatedly requested Colonel Paine to order an election in his company to supply the vacancies. Colonel Paine, however, never attempted to name officers for the company.

The secret of this otherwise unaccountable perversity may possibly be found in the fact that Adjutant Buck, the supposed pet of Colonel Paine, being sick and tired of his position and pay, which was only that of second lieutenant, was anxious to be elected to the command of Company A. This, however, was impossible while Pender was in the way, since he was very popular with his men, and evidently preferred him to Buck. These difficulties in the regiment were seized upon to inculcate Lieutenant Pender, and upon the pretext that he and Lieutenant Singletary were ringleaders in the matter, and upon insufficient evidence, they were both discharged. Paine immediately ordered an election which he had before refused to do; and Buck was elected captain. The issue is left to history to say if the matter was one of those inimitable kind in which fate goes against a man doing his duty or whether the evidence is incriminating to Lieutenant Pender. It appears from the fact of Colonel Paine's ordering an election after Pender was discharged, when he had led the company four months, that Paine never intended Pender should be captain of his company. The men in his company, at any rate, showed their belief in him.

From a letter received in Tarboro from Monterey, Mexico, it is learned that the Court of Investigation adjourned on the 10th of October, and that its decision was sent to Washington City. Company A presented a sword to Lieutenant Pender, bearing this inscription: "Presented to Lieutenant John S. Pender by his company as a token of their respect and confidence in him as a commander. August 16, 1847." The sword was represented as a most elegant one. Colonel Paine was soon court-martialed, and Lieutenant-Colonel Fagg took command of North Carolina regulars.

One of the company members from Edgecombe wrote from Saltillo, where the companies were encamped, giving a very brief account of internal trouble in the regiment. Colonel Paine had made a wooden horse to ride the soldiers upon when they did not do their duty. This horse excited considerable curiosity both in



the North Carolina, Virginia, and Mississippi regiments. The Virginians came down into the Edgewood company camps after a parade August 16th, with the determination to break the horse to pieces. This they did, saying Colonel Paine's horse was dead. The colonel was angry and went to see Colonel Hantranch, of the Virginia regulars. The colonel laughed it off and said the boys will do such things as that. The next night the men went after the horse's carcass. Colonel Paine had a guard of eight men around it and when the men came Paine came out of his tent and hailed them. They all turned and ran toward their quarters. Paine fired and wounded two men; one belonging to Edgewood Company A, who was mortally wounded in the body.

The officers of the regiment had threatened to resign before this affair, because Colonel Paine was very fractious and sadly neglectful of his duties. After this affair took place they were determined that Paine should leave or they would. The officers in the regiment wrote him a polite note, requesting him to resign. Colonel Paine went to see General Wool and told him that Lieutenants Pender and Singletary were the cause of all the trouble. Pender and Singletary were subsequently discharged from the army by order of General Wool. These two men went to Monterey to see General Taylor with hopes of being reinstated. When Pender left, Paine ordered an election in the company and Adjutant Buck was elected captain and Robert S. Pitt second lieutenant.

Pender could not secure an investigation of the charges against him, since General Wool said he could not doubt one so zealous in the work as Colonel Paine. General Taylor refused on the ground that General Wool must have been well informed of the facts. Pender appealed to the Secretary of War for redress.

In the meantime the surgeon of the North Carolina regiment issued a certificate, signifying that Pender was not on duty at the time of the disturbance in the camp, nor on duty the day preceding; he being indisposed. It was also certified by several officers in the camp that Pender did not draw up the original paper sent to Colonel Paine, which requested the resignation. The commanding officers, General Wool and Colonel Paine, however, persistently ignored the regulation of the army, which said every man must have a trial by a court-martial.



The fact that Paine was not a military man, nor versed in military regulation, explains why he disregarded the law affecting subordinate officers and enlisted men.

Singletary had the same evidence that Pender had, and on his way home visited the President of the United States; was reinstated, and received \$125.00 for arrears due him. He was returned to Mexico to join his regiment and company on October 26, 1847, at the same time with Pender.

Their return, however, was of short duration, for soon after Pender was restored he was overtaken by the dreadful fever which had taken so many others. His remains were escorted out of Satallo by the two Edgecombe companies, a large number of Masons and several Mexicans. The body was enclosed in a tin coffin and carried to Monterey by Captain Duggan, of the Second Edgecombe, and placed where it could be easily obtained by his friends. Captain Roberts, of the Wayne Company, had resigned about this time and brought back Pender's body with him.

Colonel Louis D. Wilson was stricken by disease on the 1st of August, 1847, while on his march upon the city of Mexico. In 1848 the war ended with many noble sons left upon the fields of the slain by disease or bullets. The citizens of Edgecombe gathered together to welcome her returning troops. The volunteers left Brazos, July 5, 1848, and arrived at Old Point Comfort, Virginia, July 23d. Part of the regiment was discharged at Smithville. A dinner was given to the men as they came back, at James Bridges, Wednesday, August 17th. The banner that they carried away more than a year ago was returned neat and clean, untouched by dishonor or stain.

In the meantime the defeat of Clay and his followers was the death knell to the Whig party. The year 1848, however, caused some little reviving, but his election was due to military fame. The annexation of Texas was now closed and a dear price paid for the greed of more area. The bank question was to revive no more. The task of conserving the power which had been acquired was a thing Whiggery was unable to do. Their influence began to weaken. In North Carolina and Edgecombe especially, the Whig force did not bring prominence, for it was not the genius of her people. The State was merely held to the Whig alliance during the decade in which the real interests of the South seemed

to be represented by the Democratic party. Not until the prominent followers caught the spirit of nationalism, which in the succeeding decade came into a violent conflict with the spirit of local individualism upon which the South relied, was Whiggery threatened.

After the removal of the bugbear of Texas, the North Carolina Whig leaders believed the opportunity had come for regaining their lost strength, for welding the whole Whig party into unity. To this end they supported the policy of protective tariff. This issue, however, failed to satisfy the national policy, and it looked as if the entire institution would be demoralized.

In the meantime the question of slavery in the new territories disturbed the peace of the Taylor administration. Southern members were divided, and some portions of the South were growing warm. Debates were held all over the country, and issues were being formed for and against that institution. The antebellum Edgecombe was an entirely normal community so far as the play of the political forces was concerned. The negro-slave-plantation system created and maintained a large and special vested interest, differentiated from and in more or less chronic conflict with the local farming interest, and also the manufacturing and commercial interest in the western counties. But politicians and political interests must have bedfellows. The Edgecombe planters were always a minority of the voting population—almost all large planters—consequently there was a large area to only a few planters, and for the purpose of securing their interests they were oftentimes obliged to find and retain allies at home and in other counties in order to decry the too sharp definition of real issues. More often, also, they must be chary, for political shibboliths had turned out, for them, to be wolves in sheep's clothing.

It is due to this fact that the wave of Jeffersonian democracy, and the democracy of Jackson successively, had put the conservatives of Edgecombe (the planters and other allies) on the defensive. Neither of these movements gave heed to nor considered the fact that southern industry and society were exceptionally constructed upon a peculiar basis and each in turn threatened danger to the fabric.

The spring of 1850 still found the country in the throes of a political upheaval. The death of Mr. Calhoun, in a measure, facilitated the pacification reached by the fall of that year. Millard Fillmore, a New York Whig, successor to General Taylor, had the wisdom and foresight to ignore many of the prejudices then current in the country between the Whig and Republican parties. A further compromise was made when the slave trade was forbidden in the District of Columbia and the fugitive slave law was passed. The northern people were exasperated at this, and it became evident that party splits would soon occur.

The champions of the established regime had to rally to its support against each of these waves, and to use for their purpose such means as were found at hand. Hence a diffusion of parties—the Southern Federalists of Jefferson's time and the Southern Whigs of Jackson's. There came a strong tendency for the people to turn to democracy, except those possessed with a social class consciousness, generally known as the squires. These gentlemen almost to a man joined the Whigs throughout the county. The problem of Federal powers—now consuming the attention of all politicians—exhausted the patience of the extremists on both sides of the issue and drove them into a coalition so uncongenial upon questions of constructive policy as to require the constant effort of the country's most talented politicians to secure its preservation.

The Southern Whigs in the county were all states rights men. They were cotton planters pure and simple, and joined the Whig party from a sense of outrage at the threat made to coerce South Carolina. Clay, it will be remembered, was at its head against the Jackson faction; but it was Calhoun who was chiefly responsible for the course of action by the Southern Whigs—"The Federal Union, it must be preserved." This proved distasteful to the Edgecombe Whigs, whose interest lay with the South. Edgecombe took slavery as a matter of course, seemingly, and that any State might secede from the Union at its pleasure.

With Calhoun and Tyler leading the Whig procession, the party entered into an alliance with Webster, Clay, and the National Republicans as a choice between two evils. For several it was an alliance and not a union. The basis of the amity within the coalition seems to have been an agreement, partly implied and

partly expressed. This was a great advantage over the Democratic party. This was due to the fact that they had no common platform. The Democratic party was compelled to take a moderate compromise position, because the party must be satisfied in all sections of the country; whereas, the Whigs in the South took the ultra southern ground and could abuse the Democrats as traitors to the South for not going as far as they did, and in the North, vice versa. The Whigs were not concerned about what you could prove on their northern allies. They did not profess to think alike, and they could give up the northern Whigs freely, even if they involved the northern Democrats. In the end they became pro-slavery Whigs, supporting all measures affecting the general interest to the section in which they lived. Nearly all Edgecombe Whigs were anxious not only to safeguard southern control over southern affairs, but to preserve the "Union of their fathers."

In 1850 Henry Toole Clark, son of Major James W. Clark, a member of Congress in 1815, was elected to the State Legislature from Edgecombe. It had become obvious, however, at this time that Whiggery was declining, and with the compromise of 1850 it was a self-evident fact. H. T. Clark had inherited much of the influence formerly possessed by Dr. Hall, Toole, and L. D. Wilson, and assisted by R. R. Bridgers and others made the county the stronghold of North Carolina democracy.

Several incidents happened to hasten the death of the Whig party before the opening conflict of the Civil War. In these Edgecombe County was no less affected than the South at large. The Edgecombe Whigs, as has been pointed out, were states rights men. They were for the South and for their native county and its interests. But with the appearance of new party principles, the "Free Soil" wing, the "Wilmot Proviso," and the John Brown raid at Harper's Ferry, the party knew that it could not retain their old principles under the governments of Whiggery. Providence was more than kind to this party, and gave to them an opportunity to hide their consciences behind a name of "Know Nothing." This party was conceived in Massachusetts in 1853 and was obligated to slavery by an oathbound brotherhood. It was late in the year 1854 before the Know Nothing movement



reached the bounds of Edgecombe. Some few Whigs embraced the privilege of organizing a party in Edgecombe, but later it was discovered to their regret.

On November 4, 1854, the opportune moment had arrived, and the form of organization appeared in the county. A group of men organized themselves under several names. It was known as the "Tarboro Squad of those renowned Invincibles." They paraded the streets, exciting the amusements of the Democrats and the astonishment of the children and darkies. Gorgeous apparel decorated their heads, and a Know Nothing gaze or nod met every question as to the origin of the party or company. The organization at Tarboro soon became recognized as the "Don Quixote Invincibles," as an ironical designation of the former Whigs.

The Know Nothing party, however, as far as Edgecombe was concerned, was destined to be shortlived. In 1854 the Democrats elected all their candidates, H. T. Clark for Senate, Joshua Barnes and David Williams for the House of Representatives, and all the local offices were filled by Democratic candidates.

In the meantime the cobweb of Know Nothingism was being spurned by the hands of not only the Democrats, but the religious societies in the country as well. The Baptist churches took the license to excommunicate several of its members who allied themselves with the movement. It became a matter of choice with the expelled whether they preferred their Know Nothingism to church fellowship. Many of the more pious and thoughtfully inclined renounced their party and were reinstated in their church. In addition to this some had a compunction of conscience which moved them to withdraw from the party and join the Democratic party. Many converts were made to democracy within the short space of six months. Southern men with southern principles, irrespective of party principles, were beginning to arrange themselves for the pending conflict over slavery. The following is a letter written to the editor of the Tarboro paper by a man who was a Democrat but had been enticed away to the Know Nothing party:

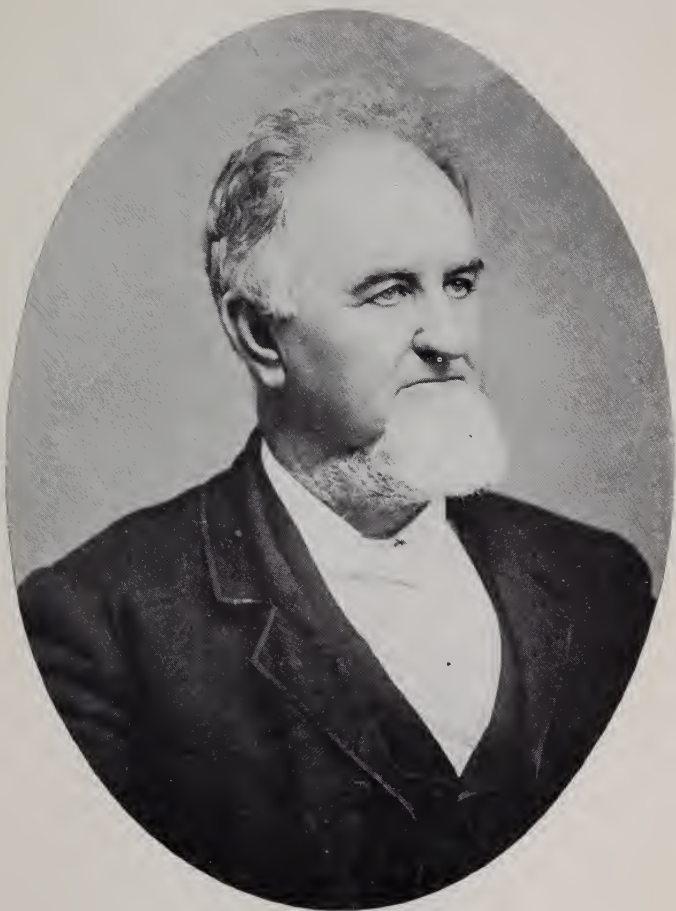
"I joined a society last March (1855) court at Nashville commonly called Know Nothings. It was by persuasion that I did it. And now I am compelled with a sense of duty to myself and county as the day of election will soon approach when every free-



man of North Carolina should vote for whom he pleases without being sworn to support any political society. And as I have not time nor inclination to attend their meetings any more, I take this method to write to you, hoping you will give it space in your excellent paper, which I think will meet the eye of some member of that council, and I hope they will grant me a dismissal according to their promise, and erase my name off their book forever. Mr. Editor, I am a Democrat, and expect to vote that ticket next election. And I hope I never shall be caught in another such scrape as that. Mr. Editor, we intend to elect Dr. Shaw in this district. I do not think Colonel Paine can be elected by this Whig-Know Nothing-American Society, with all the Democrats they can deceive." Signed, Henry B. S. Pitt.

The election of James Buchanan to the presidency was a postponement of what seemed at that time evident for four more years. Many hearts gave breath to relief when news reached the four corners of the American nation. There was a large majority in North Carolina legislative halls to back up the national administration. H. T. Clark was again sent to represent the "old State of Edgecombe."

The year 1858 dawned upon the State with one enjoyment of peace and prosperity. But dark clouds were continuing to cover the political sky. The development of the Dred Scott case and the decision of the United States Supreme Court was deeply resented by the Republican party. Fresh injury and indignation opened the wound of slavery for the conception of an awful conflict. In Edgecombe, quietness and patience actuated the citizens. There were few Republicans and not much opposition. General Bragg had served his allotted time and become ineligible for reelection. The Democrats met in a convention at Salisbury to elect his successor. William H. Holden, of Wake County, who had been a Whig, but then an ardent Democrat of the Calhoun school, was thought to be the man for the nomination. The Democrats admitted his ability, but disliked his radical policies, and being afraid of him awarded the nomination to J. W. Ellis, of Rowan. That same year the late George Howard, of Tarboro, was elected one of the three new judges for the Superior Court. Edgecombe lent full support to the nominee of the convention and gave an overwhelming Democratic majority in his favor.



JUDGE GEORGE HOWARD



The year 1860 had arrived and all parties hesitated on the border of doubt and duty. The companions of Clay, Calhoun, and Douglass could no longer stop the trend of history, and this country, with the entire South, was thrown into one of the most horrible internal struggles history has ever recorded. Early in that memorable year the bickerings of the Democrats among themselves became silenced under the strain. The Know Nothing members of the General Association of North Carolina met in a caucus, agreed to abandon Know Nothingism, substituted Whig again for a party name, and determined upon a united fight against democracy in both State and national elections for the fall election. Edgecombe sent two delegates to a convention in Wilmington. The condition essential to the growth of the party, however, with the principles of the old one, was the absence of slavery agitation in national politics. No rival party could hope for success while it was necessary to defend the principles of its Democratic opponents. Hence John Brown's fanatical raid at Harper's Ferry. The verge of the war between the states was reached, and although it presents a saddening chronicle it must bear a place in the annual of the county's history. The slave issue, however, deserves a discussion, since it is currently accepted as one of the causes of the war.

## CHAPTER V

### SLAVERY

Slavery existed in Edgecombe County from its earliest days. Before the grant of the Carolina charter to the Lord Proprietors, settlers came from Virginia into Albemarle section, and it is reasonable to believe that the first African slaves were brought in by them on their migration. The African slaves, however, were not the only type of slavery in Edgecombe County. There were Indian slaves, who had become so on account of crime, or of sale by some of their own race as captives taken in war. The early colonial records tell us how the Indians were carried up Tar River and worked as captives in the turpentine industry.

There was yet a third class of bondsmen, the unfortunate class of whites who had been indentured in England, and sold by their masters into the colony. Many such servants were apprenticed by the courts of the Province, or had been kidnapped in England, brought over and sold, or, according to Parliament, had been transported to the colony and sold for a term of years to the highest bidder. It is practically impossible to ascertain the exact date when this sort of servitude came to Edgecombe, but there are several instances of its existence. When the Reverend George Whitfield made his tour of Eastern North Carolina, visiting Edgecombe County, he had with him a white servant. The colonial records relate that St. Mary's Parish of Edgecombe had several of these servants to support, because of infirmities and old age. The law regarding the indentured servants provided for release of such servants having a good behavior and fruitful service. It is obvious that there must have been instances in which masters gave freedom to their servants before their time expired, although it is impossible, through lack of preserved records, to recite any cases. From the evidence of the reports of St. Mary's Parish one concludes that in times past such a system of servitude was extensive.

The system of negro slavery had practically the same origin as the indentured system; that is, the slaves were brought into the colony by masters from Virginia and elsewhere. A farmer settling



in Edgecombe County usually brought one or two slaves with him, or he would buy about that number as soon as he was able. Either from natural increase or from importation from Virginia—the latter which is the more probable, because it is known as early as 1665 that slaves were brought to Albemarle settlement from Virginia—there was from the first an increase in the number of slaves.

To settle a new plantation without negroes was considered a hopeless task, and, although there is rare information on this point, it is evident that the importation was considerable. It is not known how many came or under what circumstances they lived in the early periods, but when the later movements of immigration from Virginia came about the middle of the eighteenth century or perhaps a little earlier, and filled up the counties of Edgecombe, Halifax, and Northampton, it was inevitable that this immigration ceased.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Burrington and his Council had passed a law giving the new settlers the right to take the advantage of the custom which gave each immigrant fifty acres of land for each slave he brought with him. It is embodied in the instruction to Governor Burrington in 1730; in those to Governor Dobbs in 1734, and in those to Governor Tryon in 1735. Governor Johnson said in 1535 that he knew of no such instruction. The leaders of the colonists declared that such had been the custom. It was finally decided not to follow the old law, but how long this was enforced does not appear. Several persons proved their rights to land on this account, consequently the number of slaves that first came through immigration was considerable.<sup>2</sup>

The county in its earliest history increased in population very slowly, and consequently it is impossible to estimate the number of slaves in the first twenty-five years of the existence of slavery.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the "Cultivation Act," a law of England, which made the means and the price of labor very high and the artificers and laborers scarce in comparison to the number of planters, which was repealed in 1775, that slaves were numbered on a

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<sup>1</sup> Later the period of slavery importation from abroad ceased, and the steadiness of this increase indicates that it was due entirely to births.

<sup>2</sup> John Alton had 19 slaves, John Pope 6 white servants, while Elisha Battle bought 11 plantations and brought 10 slaves from Virginia as late as 1735.

<sup>3</sup> Edgecombe was originally a part of Bertie County.

clear basis. Up to the passing of this act, about 1730, it appears from old records that colonists did not buy slaves directly from Africa. In 1730, when Governor Burrington was asked to report on the conditions of the Royal African Company in North Carolina, he replied that up to that year the trade had been small. This proves that foreign importation did not flourish, and the planters were suffering because the natural increase was not sufficient. Governor Burrington added that under the existing condition the colonists had been "under the necessity of buying the refuse, refractory and distempered negroes brought from other governments," whereas it would, he did not doubt, be an easy matter to sell a shipload of good negroes in almost any part of the province.

The conditions of importation may be seen from the fact that in 1754 only nineteen negroes were entered in the custom house at Bath, and that the average number brought into Beaufort for the preceding seven years was sixteen. It is likely, however, that an additional number were brought in without paying duty, since the custom houses were very loosely kept.

Under these conditions and that of the English Cultivation Act, the planters were unable to do their work efficiently. They scarcely did one-third of the work in a day that the Europeans did in Europe, and then the laborer's wages was from two to three, four, and five shillings a day. Under these circumstances the planters were not able to go on with improvements in building and clearing lands unless they could purchase two or three negroes; therefore the people appealed to the Governor for a relaxation of the Cultivation law. This law was an act of England granting a hundred acres of land to settlers, who were under obligation to cultivate at least six acres. Burning off stumps, etc., was not considered cultivation. This was done in order to prevent speculation by the settlers. The relaxation of the law was granted by England about 1775.

This relaxing of the law gave rise to a new immigration, and from 1775 to the Civil War we find a record of a steady flow of negroes into Edgecombe County.

In 1709 the Reverend James Adam, a missionary of the Church of England, wrote from an adjoining precinct that there were 1,332 souls in the county, of whom 211 were negroes. About one-

sixth of the whole population must have been blacks. In 1754, forty-five years later, the first census was taken. The clerks of the several counties, by instruction, made a return to the Governor of all the taxables in their respective counties. The number of blacks reported was 624, and the whites were 1,160.<sup>1</sup> This gave an increase over the year 1709 of 413 slaves and a few whites, the ratio of the increase being two to one in favor of the negroes.

There was some dispute as to the accuracy of this census, since Governor Dobbs pronounced it defective. The people, he said, were holding back their taxables and negroes. The error could not have been great, for a year later he himself ordered a more correct return of the total number of negro taxables, and the number returned was proved to be the same as in 1754.

Still another census was made in the same way in 1756, when it appears that there were about 1,091 negro taxables, and 1764 whites, showing an increase of about 167 negroes and 514 taxables over the preceding year. It must have been evident that the increase of the negroes was from births, since Dobbs in 1761 said that but few people had come in bringing slaves since the French and Indian wars. This sudden change and growth of the white population may be attributed to a heavy migration of whites at this time of Edgecombe's history. Families were coming to settle in the fertile bottoms of Fishing and Swift Creeks. Elisha Battle, with several more prominent men, came to Edgecombe between 1750 and 1760, and bought 1,212 acres of land from Mr. Sanders and settled with his family.

Another census made in 1766 gives both white and black taxables: there being no distinction between white and black; one is without means of ascertaining the exact number of negroes in that year. It is to be noted, however, that there was a considerable decline of population in both races.<sup>2</sup> In 1767 both slaves and white had decreased in number. There were 1,060 slaves and 1,200 white taxables, making a decrease of 29 slaves and over 330 whites. This was due to the fact that in 1757, a year after the census in 1756 was taken, Halifax County was formed as an independent county from Edgecombe. This county, as can be

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<sup>1</sup> Granville County was cut off from Edgecombe in 1747, making a considerable decrease in the original number.

<sup>2</sup> Due to formation of Halifax County, 1757.

seen from maps, included several slave-holders in the bottoms of Fishing Creek. There must have been a heavy increase of slaves, considering the population Halifax took from Edgecombe when the two counties were divided.

In 1790 there was a notable increase of slaves and a normal number of whites. There were in the county 1,260 heads of families. Of the entire families only 481 owned slaves, and only twenty-seven families owned twenty or more slaves. Four men owned a considerable number, Edward Hall 86, Absolom Benton 40, Lewis Ervin 36, and Josiah Fort 86. Seventy-five families owned less than 20 and over 10, and a hundred families owned less than 10 and over 2. Ninety-nine owned 2, while seventy-nine families owned only one slave. The entire white population is here reported for the first time. There were 3,152 slaves and 6,933 whites, an increase of 2,092 slaves. Since we have no account of the entire white population prior to this census, no definite comparison can be given, but it will be a safe estimate to say it was a ration of three to one. It was during this great increase also that Nash County was formed from Edgecombe, taking with it a liberal portion of her population.

In 1800 there was a decrease of 417 whites compared with the census of 1790, and an increase of 753 slaves. It is to be noted that the year 1800 marks the general trend that made Edgecombe a slave county and finally marked her as being one of the great black counties of the South. Never again does the census bring the total population of whites up to the number of blacks. There never were many free negroes in the county. For the year 1800, when the first returns giving the number of free negroes were made, there were only 106, a small number as compared with the slaves. In 1860 there were only 389 free negroes.

In 1830 the white and black populations were almost equal. In 1840 a sudden leap, as if some mighty forces had shot servitude to the forefront, ran the number of slaves to 15,708, or over twice as many slaves as there were white. There is only one solution for this great rise—cotton, which was the largest crop of the eastern counties, had a sudden boom when the new invention of the cotton gin came to be used. It is nothing but right to say that in the early days of the county the most earnest men looked upon slavery as an evil that would in time disappear; but with the



invention of the gin, Edgecombe, as nature so placed her, became a great center of the cotton industry. It was then discovered by her great leaders that slavery was a "natural institution," the only relationship that could exist between the whites and the blacks, and together with the entire South, Edgecombe began to force political parties to assume a positive and uncompromising defense of the slavery.

In 1850 the tide again changes, the number of slaves declines, because the men of Edgecombe began to go West in search of new lands, carrying their slaves with them. It is noticeable that the most sales of negroes in Tarboro were made between 1845 and 1850, all of which indicates a tendency to purchase negroes for western farming.

In 1860, the last census before the liberation of the slaves, shows that there were 10,108 negroes in bondage and 389 free negroes, and a population of 6,789 whites. Slaves had increased nearly 2,000 in number and the whites had decreased nearly 1,500 in numbers since 1850.

These are the official returns, and therefore constitute the only means of knowing with any degree of certainty how many negroes there were in the county. Unsatisfactory as they may be, they nevertheless indicate a tendency which is not wholly uninformative—namely, a system which brought Edgecombe ultimately into a slave and, then immediately after the Civil War, a negro regime.

The law concerning slavery is varied and extensive. New conditions demanded new changes in the law to protect slavery in its operation. Law never succeeds unless it corresponds to the particular needs of the age in which it exists; consequently one need not be surprised at the alarming number or the absurdity of the laws in the past. They had a particular purpose and function then that similar laws today would not have. It is necessary to know in the beginning, however, that most laws about slaves were passed to protect the master and not the slave.

In addition to the laws of the Province, there were local regulations made by the County Court of Edgecombe. The earliest of these was in 1741. It declared that "no person whatsoever, being a Christian or of Christian parentage—imported or brought into the precinct—should be deemed a servant for any term of years" unless by indenture or agreement. The court records at



Tarboro show one example by which this law was actually taken advantage of by the dependent classes. Soon after this law was passed, Samuel Williams, who must have been of low English descent, bound himself to George Patterson for ninety-nine years as a servant without permission to leave his master, and to obey all the commands given to him, for food and clothing.

According to the same law, if the servants binding themselves thus should become disobedient or unruly, they might be carried before a Justice of the Peace and sentenced to not more than twenty lashes; if they ran away and were recaptured, they were to serve double the time lost. Moreover, the law also provided that if any person should "presume to whip a Christian naked," without an order from a magistrate, such person should forfeit forty shillings proclamation money to the party injured. Servants by indenture had the privilege to carry complaints to magistrates, who might bind masters and mistresses "to answer the complaint at the next County Court." If any master discharged his servant while sick before the servant's time of service expired, the County Court was to levy on the master for enough to enable the church warden of the parish to care for the sick servant until death or recovery. If the servant recovered, he became free.

The law of servants was considered more lenient than the law of slavery. In 1753 the law prohibited any slave to go armed with any weapon of defense or to hunt in any manner unless he should have a certificate from his master. The servants enjoyed this privilege. Later this right was restricted by an act which forbade any chairman of the county to give permission to any slave to carry a gun or hunt in any form unless the slave's master or mistress went on a heavy bond for damages to any persons injured by slaves. No slave was allowed to carry a gun on a plantation where a crop was not cultivated, and in case of cultivation, only one slave had the privilege.

In order to see that such restrictions were carried out the justices of the County Court divided the county into districts, and yearly at the first court appointed freeholders in each district, duly sworn as searchers. The searchers examined negro quarters four times a year or more as they thought necessary. As an in-

ducement for this office, the searchers were exempted from serving as constables, or upon the roads, or in the militia, or as jurors, and did not have to pay any provincial road or parish tax.

November 28, 1803, after a threatened uprising of the negroes in Eastern North Carolina, the law of searchers was changed to the patrol system by the quarterly session of Court of Pleas of Tarboro. They were to conform to the rules and regulations, one copy of which was to be furnished to each and every district. During the time they were engaged the patrolmen were to be exempted from the same duties as the searchers had been. But if one should neglect or refuse to act, he had to forfeit and pay the sum of ten pounds.

The rules and regulations to be observed by the patrolmen of the several districts in Edgecombe County were without a doubt very strict. They provided for the patrolmen to go by night and at such time as they thought would answer the object of their appointment to all the houses inhabited by slaves within their respective districts once in every and each month or oftener if necessary. The patrolmen, if they should find in any of the houses or in the possession of a slave, or in any place of concealment any guns or fighting implements, they should seize the slaves and present them to the court of the county. Reports were to be made in writing, specifying the time and the place where the person or persons in whose possession or care they were found. If any circumstances indicated danger to the peace or safety of the State attending the finding, the patrolmen should apprehend the slave or slaves on whom suspicion rested and carry him before some Justice of the Peace to be dealt with as the law directed. If the patrolers found any slave during night or day more than one mile from the house or the plantation in which he lived, without a paper in writing or some other strong convincing evidence of leave or orders from his owner, overseer, or employer, they or any two of them were permitted to inflict punishment, according to the opinion they entertained respecting the design of the offender, not exceeding ten lashes. If they found any slave behaving in a riotous or disorderly manner, whether at or from home, with or without written papers, they or any two of them might inflict punishment according to the circumstances of the case, not exceeding fifteen lashes, provided they were of the

opinion that such riotous or disorderly behavior did not proceed from a premeditated design to disturb the public peace. But when they saw or knew of a riot or other disorderly behavior among slaves indicating danger to the peace or safety of the State, they should take and use all necessary and proper means—sometimes improper means—to apprehend the offenders, and after having apprehended them, they, without inflicting any punishment other than was necessary to their safe keeping, should carry the slaves before some Justice of the Peace to be dealt with according to law.

It is to be understood and at all times remembered that the object of patrolling was to prevent public mischief without creating private injury, and, therefore, a slave found from home by day or at an early hour of the night without papers, but behaving in an orderly and peaceable manner and having in his possession something known to belong to his master, overseer, or employer, as a horse or ox, or seeming to be engaged in the performance of some duty to the person to whom he owed obedience, was not punished or turned aside or unreasonably restrained. The patroller or patrollers finding a slave in such situation went with the slave to his owner to know whether the story told by such a slave was true or false, and if false, then severe punishment was inflicted.

Since some owners, overseers, and employers of slaves were not capable of writing, it was further provided that a negro man of good moral character and peaceful demeanor was not to be punished for a mere act of going without a written paper on Saturday night to see his wife at a house of good fame, where he had long been accustomed to going in such manner with the consent of his master or mistress, overseer or employer, or with an order of illness by a doctor.

In 1807 new rules were adopted by the Quarterly Sessions of Common Pleas in Tarboro. The patrollers were required to call on the master, mistress, or overseer, as the case might be, for the names of their slaves from twelve years of age and upwards. The slaves were enrolled on a list provided and kept for that purpose. Each succeeding time they went through their districts the patrolmen called the names of the slaves that they had collected, and if any were missing or absent between the hours of nine o'clock at night and six o'clock in the morning, or on the Sabbath day,

the patroller called the master or mistress of such slave which was absent to know whether they were gone on business or by their special permit or knowledge; if neither was the case, the slave was adjudged guilty of the same crime and liable to the same punishment as if caught without permit from home. The older negroes still tell how they were accustomed to line up for the roll call when the patroller came to the plantation.

Frequently a disagreement would arise between the master and the patroller with respect to the punishment of the slaves caught away from home. It was then the duty of the patroller to order the master or the mistress of the slave to bring him before some Justice of the Peace at a time and place which they might appoint. Whenever the master refused to comply with this demand, the patroller would apply to some Justice of the Peace for a warrant for such slave or slaves to appear before him or some other Justice of the Peace to be examined and tried for offense, in which case the cost, according to law, was to be paid by the owner of the slave.

It can be said, without injury to the radicals' feelings or imposing on the abolitionists' sympathy, that the law concerning slavery was both good and bad. In some instances the slave was protected by local laws enacted by the Inferior Court. This is illustrated by the prevention of whipping slaves who professed Christianity. In 1715 an act prohibiting private burial places was passed in the General Assembly. The frequent occurrence of several mysterious deaths provided that every planter, attorney, and owner of every settled plantation should set apart a burial place, and fence the same for interring all such Christian persons, whether bound or free, that should die on the plantation. What traveler in passing through Edgecombe County is not, today, greeted with scores of little grave yards afar off on the hill extended from the farm mansion? This is the system left from the early period of slavery and is a consequence of this law.

As a matter of precaution, there were, before the interring, three or four neighbors who were required by law to view the corpse, and ascertain whether the person came to his or her death by any violent or unlawful means. If such was the decision of the viewers, it was to be reported to the coroner. A penalty of five shillings was imposed on any one who refused to come and view



the corpse. Moreover, if any person dying were buried contrary to the law, the person or persons occasioning the same were forced to forfeit and pay the sum of ten pounds, one-third of which went to the informer, one-third to the Lords Proprietors, and the other one-third to the poor. This law, of course, excluded such cases in which it was the desire of the deceased when in his or her life time to be interred elsewhere. This law no doubt did much to prevent unnecessary slaying of the negro slaves who occasionally disobeyed their masters to the extent of killing them.

The most lenient law made by the legislature affecting slaves in Edgewcombe was made in 1753. In case a slave did not appear properly clothed and fed, and was convicted of stealing corn, cattle, or hogs from any person not his owner, the injured person could maintain an action against the master and recover damages, and the slave remained unpunished by the law. This law, however, did not prevent the slave from being chastised by his master.

The great trial for the man in bondage had not yet come. The law gave some liberty prior to the year 1800 that he was not to enjoy afterwards. No servant could be whipped, who professed to be a Christian, on his or her bare back, although we find many instances where the law forbade slaves to leave the plantation, and they were refused the right to raise horses, cattle, and hogs—chickens being the only fowl allowed, and in one particular statute of 1777 it was unlawful for any slave in the county to grow tobacco for his own use under the penalty of five pounds currency for every five hundred hills so cultivated, which was to be recovered from the master or overseer. Yet the slave was not treated as a beast. On the eve of the Revolutionary War a more humane law protected the slave from willful and malicious killing. After May 5, 1774, any person found guilty of a premeditated or willful murder of his slave was tried by the same law and received the same fine as if the slave had been a freeman.

During the Revolution the slaves in various sections of the precinct took the opportunity of becoming free. Masters, especially Loyalists, were freeing their slaves, and to such an alarming extent that a law passed by the legislature on November 12, 1777, forbade a master to free his slave except for meritorious service, and then at such times only as the County Court allowed the



decision and gave a license of good faith. There are a few instances where the slave owners were debarred from freeing negroes by this law.<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally, through the graciousness of the master, a slave was freed irrespective of the law, and the negro took chances for his freedom by hiding in the swamps and numerous reed marshes in the county. This gave the slave dealers opportunities to recapture negroes and sell them again, when the poor slave was so unfortunate as not to find one to plead his case. Various boats made frequent trips up the Pamlico and Tar rivers, bringing various commodities of interest to the negroes and finally enticing them away from their hiding places under profession of friendship. English traders came up Tar River to trade with the slaves and decoyed hidden negroes away. A law was passed by the legislature preventing the Englishmen from trading them or carrying them. In 1791 a law was passed to prevent the merchant or trader to harbor or trade with any slave under any pretense. This no doubt was designed to prevent the negroes from hiding and also from being carried away.

In many instances the slaves, in their attempt to get away from the county, forged passes. The legislature later made it punishable by death for a slave to attempt such methods of escape.

The slave who was set free without being adjudged and allowed by the court of the county and a license issued, after an expiration of six months, was taken up by the church wardens and sold as a slave at the next court at public outcry, and the value of the slave was given to the poor. There are three cases where the negroes were sold at the Tarboro court house in 1800. It is not known how much the poor received, however.

In 1781 the law permitted the masters to rent their slaves out by public auction to the highest bidder for any term not exceeding one year. Regular hiring days held in January were established at the court house in Tarboro. Frequently men who had large estates consisting of negroes permitted them to be hired out and the money paid over to their wives after their decease for a con-

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<sup>1</sup> There was no more talk of emancipating slaves until 1835. From this time until the Civil War slaves were frequently emancipated by their various masters. In 1851 several slave masters in the county liberated their slaves, while Jacob Mettles, a prominent planter, emancipated six at one time and shipped them to Liberia on board the "Morgan Dix" from Baltimore.

tinuous income. There are several instances in which negro laborers were rented at the Tarboro court house. The average price about 1800 ranged from \$150 to \$200 a year for men, and \$65 to \$90 for women. By 1856 at the hirings, prices had increased and advanced from the time the custom began. Negro men hired for \$165 to \$200 a year—plow boys and women from \$100 to \$125. In 1859, a year later, the price increased considerably over 1858. Cornfield hands, girls from eight to ten years old, brought from \$250 to \$300; ten to twelve years old, \$80 to \$85, while boys from fifteen to eighteen years old brought \$180 to \$202. Men brought unheard of prices, varying from \$175 to \$250. All this personal property was put in a heap together and bidden off as public service.

The manner of trying slaves was very interesting as to the method of economizing time. A slave committing an offense, crime, or misdemeanor was committed by the Justice of the Peace to the "common gaol of the county," and the sheriff of the county upon the commitment certified the same to the justice of the commission of the County Court, temporarily in the county. The justice issued a summons for two or more justices of the court and four freeholders, such as had owned slaves in the county, to constitute a court. The three justices and the four slaveholders were empowered, and required upon oath, to try all manner of crimes and offenses that were committed by any slaves at the court house of the county, and to take evidence and confession of the defender on the oath of one or two creditable witnesses or such testimony of negroes or mulattoes, bond or free, with circumstances that were convincing to the justices and to the slave owners, without the "solemnity of a jury."

In order to try slaves, when the offense was of a small and usual nature, and to prevent delay and great loss of time and expense to the owners, a law, as an act for remedy, was passed in 1783. This law provided for all justices to have the power to issue subpœnas to compel the attendance of witnesses and to proceed immediately upon the trial of any slave and to pass sentence and award execution: provided, however, the punishment extended no farther than the ordering of the defendant to be whipped, not exceeding forty lashes.

Any Justice of the Peace of the county, who was an owner of slaves, was qualified, irrespective of moral integrity, and pronounced fit by the court to act as a member of the County Court though he or they should not be summoned thereto. The law was emphatically stated by the phrase "anything before contained to the contrary, in any wise notwithstanding."

Christian character was an important element in slavery. It made the slave more desirable, and it also influenced the courts and masters to show leniency to the slaves and to treat them with greater mildness and humanity. In case a slave was not a Christian, it was produced as evidence on the trial against him for capital and other trials of crime. He was thus declared to be under a greater obligation to tell the truth. It was, therefore, declared by one act of law in 1741 as a source of protection against perjury, that when any negro or mulatto, bond or free, should, upon due proof made or pregnant circumstance appearing before the County Court, be found to have given a false testimony, was without further trial, to have by order of the court one ear nailed to the pillory, and stand in this position for the space of one hour, and then have the same ear cut off, and the other ear nailed in the same manner and cut off at the expiration of one hour, and moreover to have thirty-nine lashes well laid on his or her back at the common whipping-post.

As a method of prevention of false testimony the chairman of the court charged each negro or mulatto in capital cases before his or her testimony, on not being a Christian, to tell the truth.

There was a case about 1771 and also 1825 in which a negro man called Simon was given a mild sentence of this law. For false testimony he was branded in the palm of his right hand with a hot iron and imprisoned in close jail for twelve months.

The most noted case, that of the State against Will, of a slave, and the greatest in the entire State was tried in Edgecombe County before Judge Donnell in the last Circuit Court, January 22, 1834. It was a case that awakened a general and profound interest throughout the country, and settled the true relation between master and slave in the State. It recognized the right of the slave to defend himself against the assaults of his master in the preservation of his own life—a thing never asserted by slaves heretofore in the county.

A slave, Will, was indicted for the murder of Richard Baxter. Will belonged to James S. Battle, and the deceased, Richard Baxter, was the overseer of Battle, and was entrusted with the management of the slave at the time of the homicide. Early in the morning of the 22d day of January, the day the killing took place, Will had a dispute with another slave, Allen, who was also a slave of Mr. Battle, and a foreman on the same plantation of which the deceased was an overseer. A dispute arose between Will and Allen about a hoe which Will claimed as his own because of having helved it in his own time, but Allen directed another slave to use it on that day.

Some angry words passed between Will and the foreman, and Will broke out the helve, and walked off about one-fourth of a mile to a cotton field and began picking cotton. Soon after the dispute they informed Mr. Baxter, the overseer, of the occurrence. He immediately went into the house, and while he was in there his wife was heard to say, "I would not, my dear;" to which he was said to have replied in a positive tone of voice, "I will." In a very short time after this Mr. Baxter came out of his house to the place where the foreman was and told him that he was going after Will, and instructed the foreman to take his cowhide and follow him at a distance. Mr. Baxter then returned to the house, took his gun, saddled his horse, and rode to the screw,<sup>1</sup> a distance of about six hundred yards, where Will was at work.

The overseer came up within 20 or 25 feet of the screw without being observed by the slave, dismounted, and hastily got over the fence into the screwyard. He walked directly to the cotton screw, gun in hand, where the slave was standing, engaged in throwing cotton, and ordered him to come down. The slave took off his hat in an humble manner and came down. Mr. Baxter spoke some words to Will, which were not heard by any of the three negroes present. The slave immediately began to run. He proceeded about fifteen steps when the overseer fired upon the slave, sending the whole load in the negro's back.

The wound caused by the shot was sufficient to have produced death, but the slave continued to make off through a field, and after retreating about 150 yards in sight of the overseer, was pur-

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<sup>1</sup> A device for packing cotton.



sued by two slaves directed by Mr. Baxter, who said, "He could not go far." The overseer himself, laying down his gun, mounted his horse, and having directed his foreman, who had just come up, to pursue the prisoner also, rode around the field and headed off the wounded slave. Mr. Baxter soon dismounted and pursued the negro on foot, and as soon as the slave discovered he was blocked, he changed his course to avoid the overseer, and ran in another direction towards the woods. The overseer, however, soon overtook him and collared him with his right hand. In the meantime the negroes ordered to pursue the slave came toward the slave and the overseer.

They were ordered by Mr. Baxter to seize the wounded slave. One of them attempted to lay hold of the negro, who had his knife drawn, and the left thumb of the overseer in his mouth. When he came up, Will struck at the slave with his knife, but missed him and cut the overseer on the thigh. In the scuffle which followed between Will and Mr. Baxter, the overseer received a wound in the arm which occasioned his death.

Soon after the overseer let go his hold on Will, who ran towards the nearest woods and escaped. Mr. Baxter did not pursue the slave, but he ordered the negroes to do so, but soon recalled them. When they returned, Mr. Baxter was sitting on the ground bleeding, and as they came up the overseer said, "Will has killed me; if I had minded what my poor wife said, I would not have been in this fix."

In addition to the wound on his thigh, Mr. Baxter had a slight puncture in his chest about skin deep, and a wound about 4 inches long and 2 inches deep on his right arm above his elbow. The loss of blood occasioned the overseer's death, and he died in the evening of the same day. In the meantime, the slave went to his master and surrendered himself, and the following day was arrested. When the negro was informed of the death of the overseer, he exclaimed, "Is it possible?" and appeared to be much affected by the report.

The case was immediately called by the court. The jury hesitated to prove Will guilty of felony and murder on the indictment specified and charged against him by the court. The jurors were altogether ignorant of the law, since there was no precedent in the case. They requested the advice of the court upon the



matter. In the meantime, Judge Darnell claimed the slave was guilty of "feloniously killing and slaying" Mr. Baxter, and promised the sentence of death from the special verdict which had been made by the jury. The slave appealed to the Supreme Court. B. F. Moore, a reputable lawyer, living on Fishing Creek, interceded for Will and defended his case in the Supreme Court. It was conceded that Baxter occupied the place of master, and, in his capacity of overseer, was invested with all the authority of owner, in the means of rendering the prisoner subservient to his lawful commands. With this concession freely made, it was believed that if the shot of Mr. Baxter had proved fatal, he would have been guilty of murder, and not of manslaughter. The instrument used and the short distance between the parties were sufficient to produce death, and nothing but the want of malice could have deprived the act of any features of murder.

It was then proved that Baxter had loaded his gun and proceeded to the cotton screw with the intent to shoot the slave if the latter should run. It was clear then that if Baxter's shot had been fatal, he would have been guilty of murder and not of manslaughter. This was manifest from the evidence of his whole conduct, and particularly so from the fact of his directing the foreman to walk behind at a distance. If he had armed himself for defense, expecting a conflict with the prisoner, he would have summoned aid and kept men at his command ready for encounter. It became evident to the defendant's mind that the purpose of the shooting had actually been formed and time had been given him for reflection. The argument by Mr. Moore on behalf of Will was therefore as follows: First, that if Baxter's shot had killed the prisoner, Baxter would have been guilty of manslaughter at the least. Second, this position being established, the killing of Baxter under the circumstances related was manslaughter on the part of the prisoner.

The public mind was rapidly perverted by the opinion that any means might be resorted to in order to coerce the perfect submission of the slave to his master's will, and that any resistance to that will, reasonable or unreasonable, lawfully places the life of a slave at his master's feet. Mr. Moore attempted to draw the line, if there was any, before the jury, of the lawful and unlawful exercises of the master's power in Edgecombe County.

The decision in the case of *State v. Mann* was used as a precedent. This case left the slave where his life was spared, under the slender guardianship of the "frowns and execrations" of a moral community against cruelty. Judge Henderson had formerly fixed the true boundary of the master's power. "It extends," he says, "to securing the service and labors of the slave, and no farther." He furthermore declared that a power over the life of the slave was not surrendered by the law, because the possession of such a power is always necessary to the purposes of slavery, and that his life was in care of the law. The previous laws, similar to those which subsisted in older slave countries, which declared the relation of master and slave, and had been practiced in the county since its formation, was no longer believed to be intended to cover the entire relation between master and slave. On the contrary, the idea of perfect submission of the slave was in accordance with the policy which should regulate condition of life, whenever it existed.

It is safe to say that Mr. Moore did not, however, argue so much from the point of law—which if it had been interpreted literally, would have been decidedly against him—as he did the irresistible force of public opinion. That force was that time setting in a countercurrent against the use of absolute power. It must be depreciated and stopped or absolute power would be clearly proved necessary to the ends of slavery. The courts of the country began to receive the light and to foster the enlightened benevolence of the age, by interpreting the powers that one class of people claimed over another, in conformity, not with the spirit that tolerated the barbarian who was guilty of savage cruelty, but with that which heaped upon him the frowns and depreciations of the community. When one views the proceedings of the early courts and the sentences of the people, one cannot but help admitting that while the courts were lauding the Christian benevolence of the times, manifested by the humane treatment of the slaves, they were engaged in investigating to what possible extent the master might push his authority without incurring civil responsibility.

From this viewpoint Mr. Moore made his plea one of a moral nature. "I am," he said, "arguing no question of abstract right, but I am endeavoring to prove that the natural incidents of

slavery must be borne with because they are inherent to the condition itself; and that any attempt to restrain or punish a slave for the exercise of a right, which even absolute power cannot destroy, is inhuman and without the slightest benefit to the security of the master or to that of society at large."

"If," continued Mr. Moore, "the deceased had been resisted, a great degree of force might have been used, and the law would not have been scrupulous in determining the excess. If he had been chastising the prisoner in the ordinary mode and death had ensued, it would have been nothing more than an unfortunate accident. But the prisoner was neither resisting the master nor did the calamity grow out of an attempt to chastise. It is confidently contended that a master has not by law of the land the right to kill his slave for a simple act of disobedience, however provoking may be the circumstances under which it is committed; that if a slave be required to stand and he run off, he has not forfeited his life. This is conclusive, if the law will never justify a homicide except it be committed upon unavoidable necessity, and will excuse no one, except it be done by misadventure or so *defendendo*. There is no principle of criminal law which will justify or excuse the death that has been caused through the provocation of the passion alone."

Moreover, it was shown by Mr. Moore that the prisoner was shot in the act of making off from his overseer, who was prepared to chastise him. A master's authority to apprehend the slave was conceded by the court not to be greater than that of a constable or a sheriff to arrest for misdemeanor; and a constable could not kill in order to prevent an escape of one guilty of that kind of offense. The law had such a high regard for human life that it instructed the officers to permit an escape rather than kill. If the officer acted illegally, by abusing his authority or exceeding it, resistance unto death was not murder. Consequently, if the master had greater authority to apprehend his slave than a law officer had to arrest under a precept for a misdemeanor, he surely did not have a greater authority than a sheriff, acting under a precept, had to arrest a felon. Here the law again shows its deep regard for human life and its detestations to kill a felon, a murderer, or traitor unless his escape be inevitable. "And in every instance in which one man can be justified in killing

another, the abuse of his power makes him guilty of manslaughter." An officer, therefore, having the right to kill a felon in order to prevent his escape, and having done so when the escape might have been prevented by more lenient means, was guilty of manslaughter. This necessity remained to be proved by Mr. Moore, for it was never to be presumed. No such necessity appeared in the finding of the jury. In legal contemplation, therefore, it did not exist.

The prisoner was thus looked upon as in the act of disobedience and not resistance, between which there was a vast difference. The deceased then must have exceeded his authority according to the evidence and the defendant was guilty of manslaughter only. The slave simply slew his overseer, after having been dangerously shot, pursued and overtaken. The tamest and most domestic brute would doubtless have done likewise. Was the victim now to be a sacrifice offered to the policy which regulated the relation of slavery among our fathers? May we say that the momentum of feeling, acting through the juries of the county and the spirit of the legislature at Raleigh, that the interests of society were at stake and demanded a permanent settlement of the extent of a master's authority?

By a timely and judicious administration of the law, in relation to this subject, the courts did much to formulate a sound public opinion. They used the opportunity afforded by their situation in a most happy manner. The condition of the slave was rapidly advancing under the new kind of enlightenment and inspiring civilization. The negro and the white were now, by the decision returned in Will's case, placed under the very same law. Will was declared guilty of manslaughter.

A very interesting phase of the slave system in the county was the method of ascertaining the age and value of the slaves. Whenever a slaveholder was desirous of learning the age of his slave,<sup>1</sup> he carried the slave before the grand jury convened at the County Court and the court pronounced the age of the slave.

Quite frequently slaves were slain both accidentally and premeditatedly. In either case the slayer if detected was responsible to the owner for the value of the slave killed. Men who were

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<sup>1</sup> It was necessary to know the age of slaves in order to determine the selling price of said slave, the value being fixed by the age, etc.



familiar with certain slaves were summoned as a jury to estimate the value. George Sugg, a farmer living on his farm in the eastern part of the county, was called upon in 1806 to estimate the value of a slave killed upon an adjoining farm. The slave was a runaway and belonged to Mr. Mace. He was robbing the citizens in the vicinity of Little River, now Fishing Creek, when William Mace, a manager for his father, went in search for the slave. Mr. Mace tarried at Little River approximately five days, but not finding the slave was about to return home. On his way back he visited Mr. Toole's slavequarters, a slave owner, in the night. A light was observed within, but it was put out in a moment. Mr. Mace went in and blowing up a light saw the slave, Tom, and recognized him. The slave, on being discovered, attempted to secape. Mr. Mace called to him to stand, threatening to shoot him if he did not, but the slave ran off, upon which Mr. Mace shot him with a pistol that he held in his hand. It was the design of Mr. Mace to shoot over the negro's head in order to frighten him, but some of the shots hit and killed him instantly. The court passed the opinion that the negro was worth fifty pounds.

In the valuation of a slave, his behavior and power of workmanship were always taken into consideration by the courts. Our record of the prices of slaves is very incomplete and almost without any effect. The first records we were able to find were in 1775, but no record was given of the selling price.

Ten years later John Ford sold one negro man to Jeremiah Hilliard for 180 pounds. It is inferred from this price that it was apparently the same ten years previous. In 1788 one negro boy about eight years sold in Tarboro for forty-five pounds, or \$107.00. Joseph Buns sold a negro woman in 1788 for sixty pounds to John Dew, and at the same a negro girl, sixteen years old, was sold to a Virginia planter from Edgecombe County for ninety pounds. A year later negro boys about sixteen or seventeen years old sold for 120 pounds each.

In 1790 John Dew sold the negro woman back to Buns for fifty pounds. Girls about eleven years old brought seventy pounds in the slave market in Tarboro in 1790. These are some of the estimates of slave prices in the early history in the county. Later



slaves brought 100 pounds per head. Richard Blackledge, of Tarboro, sold a negro boy about thirteen to sixteen years, 4 feet 8 inches high, for 200 milled dollars.

Halifax traders made frequent trips to Edgecombe for slaves to start a slave market. Jacob Barrow, of Halifax, purchased slaves at Tarboro in 1789 at a normal price of 120 pounds, and in 1792 negro men at the age of forty-five brought 100 pounds, about the same price as in 1790.

In 1794 a negro woman and child brought 200 Spanish milled dollars, and numerous other negroes brought about the same price.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century slaves brought a good price. In 1801, at open court, Bennett Barrow, a slave trader, sold to John Davidson six slaves, as follows: A woman named Millery and her three children named Harmon, Jim, and Molley, and another woman named Nelly and a child named Sam for 400 pounds. Some further evidence can be obtained from the following figures: In 1803 one negro boy sold for \$125 current money, another boy sold for \$475, still another woman and her child brought \$400, silver dollars. In 1807 a negro woman fifteen years old and her child sold for \$375, and a negro girl ten years old for \$135 current money. The physical condition of the slave and the early cultivation of cotton may have been the reason for so many enormous changes in prices. Moreover, the ability a slave had for work, trade, etc., determined in many instances the price of his body. One negro man who was a blacksmith and a good workman brought \$1,000 in Tarboro in 1818, and in 1854 a rough carpenter, about twenty-three years old, sold for \$2,000.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century slaves were estimated by "piles" or quantities. The record gives an account of a pile of negroes as follows: Moll, Suckey, Sally, Maria, Molly, Austen, Daniah, one negro woman twenty-three years old and infant child, negro girl and negro boy, one negro man nineteen years old, one negro woman and two children, and a negro fellow thirty years old, a negro boy fifteen years old, and girl fifteen years old, sold for the sum of \$5,111.

Another method was resorted to in the estimation of the value of slaves. It was not, however, the most accurate one. Frequently masters would become short of funds and be unable to pay their taxes promptly, and slaves were sold at public auction at the

court house to justify the sheriff for the taxes of the master. In 1838 an incident of this kind occurred when a negro girl was sold to the highest bidder for \$177. Again in 1843 a negro man was sold to B. F. Moore, of Fishing Creek, at a public auction in default of taxes for one dollar. This was not a fair sample of the value of slaves, and must have been sold primarily to bring the cost of taxes levied.

The peculiar life of the slave is interesting from the viewpoint of character, socially and religiously. Only now and then, according to old slaveholders' records, was a slave found truthful, faithful, and entirely honest in dealing with labor and articles. Cunning and deception became necessary, inevitable habits. The old trick played on the master by turning a huge pot, the mouth upon the floor of the master's residence in order to deaden the noise while the negroes danced, was considered a part of the slave's right. It was not fair to expect anything else of them.

The main cause of certain necessary restraints in the slave's liberty came in 1859, in the form of John Brown's raid. The press began to urge masters throughout the State to curtail the large freedom enjoyed by the negroes. Consequently Edgecombe passed a regulation forbidding negroes to assemble in groups between sunset and sunrise. Upon this event came the agitation for a new movement advocated by a book called "The Impending Crisis of the South," published in New York in 1857, but did not take effect until the time of John Brown's raid, by Hinton Rowan Helper, a native of Rowan County. This book was a compilation of statistics intended to prove that slavery was an economic curse. In addition it contained sentiments usually expected from abolition quarters in the North. The slave owner naturally rejected the literature and the cause against abolition propagandism.

The marriage of the slaves was a matter of little concern. The masters of the contracting parties must first consent to the union. That being arranged, the groom sought the bride, offered her some toy, a brass ring or beads, and if his gift was accepted, the marriage was considered made. If the couple ever separated, the present was always returned. Separation occurred often, and at times against the will of the parties. "If the woman bore no children in two or three years," says Bricknal, "the planter obliged them to take a second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth husband or

bedfellow—a fruitful woman amongst them being much valued by the planters and a numerous issue esteemed the great riches in the county.” The children belonged to the owner of the mother, and the planter took pains to bring them up properly.

Although slaves were permitted to marry among themselves, after 1787 no slave was allowed to marry or cohabit with any free negro without permission of the master of the slave in writing and the sanction of two Justices of the Peace.

The slaves showed great jealousy among themselves on account of their wives and mistresses.

The slaves owned by the first settlers were very few, but these settlers who succeeded them had large numbers. Accustomed to settling down on little farms on the outskirts of civilization, the early farmers found it hard to become absorbed into the larger life of a settled community. It has most often been his fate to recover from nature a rim of forest land, and then giving that up to some “worldly habitant of civilized life,” move on toward the West. This was a frequent occurrence in Edgecombe County in the early period. Before the county was declared an organized district, and existed merely as a precinct, many people who occupied their little holdings during the seventeenth century sold them early in the eighteenth and sought other lands for a song and dance along the frontiers. The newcomers were men of means, and usually brought their slaves with them. Men like Elisha Battle, Willie Jones, and Isaac Sessums and others came to the county with money and slaves to buy up the cheap lands. There is one instance where a man from Virginia bought eleven adjacent plantations. On these plantations on which small farmers had formerly lived, there now lived a large planter with his family and a large number of slaves. Hence a gradual change of the social life as this economic process went on.

The coming of these rich owners mark the change from the system of a few slaves to that of many. The same process was facilitated in the opening up of the turpentine industry. Here the slaves were profitable, and large numbers of them were taken to the high tracts of long straw pine which lay back from the low grounds of Swift and Fishing Creek and Tar River.

There is no phase of a subject on which there is more incomplete and unsatisfactory records than on the subject of the re-

ligious and social life of the slaves. The early writers said that the slaves in the colony, hence in the several counties, except in rare cases, were undoubtedly pagans. From all indications after the introduction of slavery the people seem to have been content that they should have remained such. Indeed, if we may believe such contemporary evidence that has come down to us, the whites did not care very much if they themselves were pagans.

The one central fact that leads to the indifference to religion on the part of the whites was the thought of the illegality in holding a Christian in bondage. The right and power of enslaving the negro seems to have been based on the fact that he was a pagan. If such was the case, would not conversion enfranchise him? It was in view of this feeling that the Lord Proprietors declared in the fundamental constitution, "Since charity obliges us to wish well to the souls of all men, and religion ought to alter nothing in any man's civil estate or right, it shall be lawful for slaves as well as for others to enter themselves and be of what church or profession any of them shall think best, and thereof be as fully members as any freeman. But yet no slave shall hereby be exempted from that civil dominion his master hath over him, but be in all things in the same state and condition he was in before."

This law was a piece of skillful manipulation on the part of the Lords Proprietors. It gave an emphatic religious freedom to the slave, and at the same time gave a concealed compromise to prevent an agitation and uprising of the slaves. There seemed, however, to have been, in spite of this law, a fear of allowing slaves to be baptized in a religious rite. The law might have been used successfully to protect the planters, should a case have arisen over the point in question, and yet it left an element of risk in it that made the planters unwilling to allow the conversion of the negroes.

The conditions that followed these circumstances is clearly seen from a statement of E. C. Taylor, a clergyman of the English Church, who on a tour in 1765 writes that he went to Edgcombe County on a preaching tour. That there being no minister there at the time, the Reverend John Burgess, the first English preacher in the county, having resigned previously, he did not have much success. He baptized in three days 159 whites and four black



infants. There is no intimation in the reports of Reverend Burgess that he was ever interested enough in the slave to attempt baptizing him.

In a letter to the Bishop of London, Reverend Mr. Moir reports that he had completed the building of the parish church at Tarborough, November 22, 1748, and that he had baptized in one day 100 children and dipped two adults. He does not mention having baptized any negroes. On April 8, 1760, however, he reported having baptized three adult negroes and 206 children. From this report Mr. Moir seems to have been an arduous worker, but Governor Dobbs attested his statement in a letter to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, January 22, 1760.

The method of instructing the slave in the religious affairs prior to the coming of new denominations was entirely according to the notions of the clergymen, so far as we know. In the earliest days the settlers of the county did not put themselves to the trouble to try to convert their slaves. In the later period, as we shall presently see, they became more interested. Not only did the masters prevent the negroes from accepting religion, but in 1787 an act of the legislature prevented any negro or mulatto to "entertain any slave in his or her house during the Sabbath during the night between sunset and sunrise on penalty of twenty shillings for the first offense and forty shillings for each subsequent offense." No assembling of slaves was tolerated unless some white man was present.

When later in the period of slavery the system became more mild, the negroes were allowed to join any church they might fancy, but they were not permitted to have a church organization among themselves. To have one was at once against the policy of the English Church and against the sentiments of the planters. The planters feared that negro churches might become centers of negro conspiracies.

The Baptists came into the eastern counties at an early date. By the middle of the eighteenth century they had become strong in the eastern part of Halifax and Edgecombe counties. Mr. Burnett, a missionary of the established church, said that they allowed negroes to speak at their churches. Their kind feelings for the slaves is shown by a reply of the Kehukee Baptist Asso-



ciation at Falls Church, to a question asked in 1783, in regard to the duty of a master towards his slave who refused to attend family worship. The answer was:

"It is the duty of every master of a family to give his slaves liberty to attend worship of God in his family, and likewise it is his duty to exhort them to it, and to endeavor to convince them of their duty, and then to leave them to their choice."

The doctrines of Baptist and Methodist churches appealed to the popular mind, and stirred the hearts of the middle, and even to a large extent the higher classes of men. Other churches had negro members, but no other church had them in such large numbers as these. There were several Presbyterians in the county, but unfortunately we have no conclusive evidence as to their relation to slavery. In both the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, the negroes were mostly slaves of the families who had their membership there, and consequently were effected only in so far as they were servants.

In all denominations the negroes had equal rights in instruction and communion, but were deprived of the privileges in the operation of the church government. When there were only a few negro members they attended services with the whites, and a certain portion of the church, in the form of a large gallery, was assigned to them.

There are today several old Baptist churches in the county which retain their old galleries over the front entrance for negro worshipers. It is not an infrequent sight to see slave-time darkies now assembling in their accustomed places when the first Sunday preaching begins. When there was a large congregation of negroes they were given a separate sermon, usually after the whites had dispersed. In the vicinity of one of the Methodist churches in the county today, "Temperance Hall," the writer was told of gatherings there by the negroes after the whites had gone to their respective homes.

There were only a few negro preachers, and a majority of the preaching was done by white preachers. The great influence that a preacher exercised over his flock was something that the whites very properly would not have surrendered to the negro preacher, had there been ever so many of the latter.

In 1831 a strict law was passed forbidding the slaves and free negroes to preach, exhort or hold prayer meetings. This in many respects was a harsh law, and in most cases in the county, as elsewhere, was not strictly enforced. The white preachers in their attempt to be apprehensive and to preach such sermons as the negroes needed, emphasized the duty of servants to masters from the text "Servants obey your masters." The more independent among the blacks, and especially among the mulattoes, rejected this kind of preaching. To them it seemed merely a white man religion and but another means of making the bonds of servitude more secure.

It was the custom to send some old preacher of great kindness, humility, and usually of very great ability to the task of preaching to the negroes. It is clearly shown in the respects that the negroes were very devoted to their preacher, and I have been told, by some of our oldest citizens, showed their appreciation of his service by frequent presents, such as cookies and articles of personal wear.

For the negroes on the plantation who joined the neighboring churches, special instruction was often provided. Such at least was shown from the report of Bishop Atkinson, of the Episcopal Church. In the Diocesan Convention, 1856, he reported that he appointed Mr. William Murphy some months before to officiate at Wilson and Rocky Mount, taking charge at the same time of religious instruction of the slaves of Mr. Turner Battle and his sister. Bishop Atkinson, himself a fine preacher, later preached in Rocky Mount one afternoon and administered the communion, and in the evening preached to the slaves of Mr. Battle and his sister. In the Episcopal Church the members must have been house servants since the Episcopalians were largely slaveholders. Usually the colored people occupied the seats reserved for the slaves as in the other churches. Sometimes there were special missions for the slaves. Captain T. W. Battle had one, but the slaves took no interest in it. There seems also to have been one in connection with the church at Tarborough that was permanent.

It is notable to observe that there was an encouraging indication of increasing interest in the religious instruction of the slaves prior to the Civil War. Ministers were employed by masters to

aid them in this part of their duty. In the earlier quarters of the diocese, Mr. Murphy was employed by the Battle family to promote a religious spirit among the slaves.

It appears from the results of the religious training or the social life of the slaves that they were either more or less content or because of the rigid laws they were afraid to uprise, since there is but one record of an insurrection even rumored in Edgecombe County. It may not be inappropriate to mention that one incident in conclusion of this chapter. It is hardly necessary to mention that the laws against insurrection were very severe. Having once begun to have slaves there was the greatest necessity that the strictest means should be used to keep down any rebellion. In 1775 the Assembly's Committee on Propositions and Grievances recommended that the searching and patrolling for negroes be made more frequent than heretofore, but no action in the county can be found to have taken place upon this recommendation.

While the Province was arming for the Revolution, negro uprisings were especially dreaded. This induced the colonists to increase their patrol. In Pitt, Beaufort, Martin, and Edgecombe counties in 1775, the report was spread that a certain ship captain whose name was Johnson, of White Haven, and who was then loading naval stores in the Pamlico River, was inciting the negroes to rebellion. The alleged plan was to the effect that through the teachings of Captain Johnson all the slaves in that region had to agree to murder on a certain night all the whites where they (the slaves) lived. They were to proceed from house to house toward the interior of the Province, murdering as they went. Here they were told they would find the inhabitants and Governor ready to help them.<sup>1</sup> Johnson was just sailing at that time, and he was reported to have said that he would return in the autumn and take his choice of the plantations on the river. The whites, it seemed, believed the story, and for a while the whole region was in a fever of excitement. The "terrified people pursued an imaginary band of 150 negroes for several days, but

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<sup>1</sup> Governor Martin was principally the instigator of this rebellion. He desired to cause trouble for the rebellious colonists.

none were taken or seen, though they had several times been fired at." This was as near a discovery of the real movement as they ever came to, and marks the only account of the first and last indication of any slave insurrection in the county.

From the account it appears that the slaves on the whole were more or less treated kindly, but Edgecombe, with the entire South, had to defend its institutions by force of arms.

## CHAPTER VI

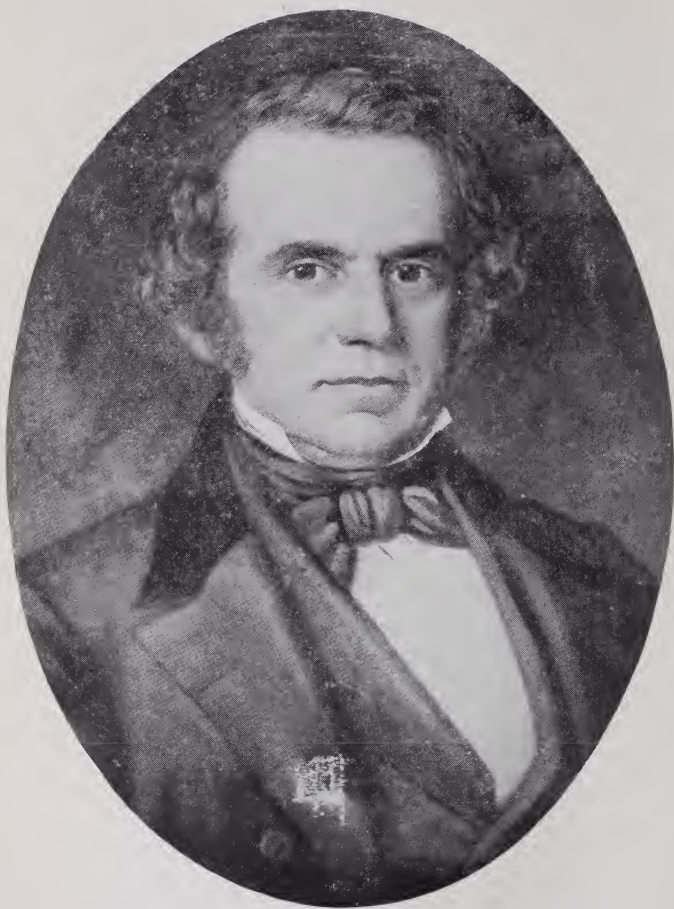
### WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

The war between the states, whether considered in regard to its political significance and the numbers engaged, or to its fierceness and duration, is recorded in history as one of the great events of the nineteenth century. Its consequences have employed the pen of philosopher and historian, economist and reformer. Almost every phase of the struggle has been discussed, considered, and recorded. The purpose of this chapter is to state facts as they happened from 1860 to 1865 in and relative to Edgecombe County.

At the beginning of the campaign of 1860 the country had not been divided geographically, and in most parts of the South it was evident that most of the people were opposed to the faction that had resolved to break up the Union in the event of Lincoln's election. In Edgecombe County the tense feeling characteristic of the secession movement had not quite obsessed the people's minds, and the most thoughtful citizens were undecided. This was partially due to the economic conditions in the county. There were, and had always been prior to 1860, two classes of people in this locality—the slaveholders and the nonslaveholders. In 1860 there were about 1,695 heads of families in the county. Of this number only about ten per cent owned slaves, and of this ratio only a small minority owned considerable numbers. Those who owned slaves had political power. A man's rating was determined by his wealth in slaves and land. As a consequence, a few were rich and many were poor. It was the constant but futile hope of the poorer classes to elevate themselves by possessing some of this wealth. The prices of slaves, however, were so great, especially towards the close of this decade, that it was well nigh impossible for the man of small means to attain his desire. Moreover, if slaves could be secured, there was no hope or opportunity to purchase land. One would, therefore, naturally expect that those of the majority who were deprived of opportunity because of a lack of this property would attempt to remain neutral in the approaching conflict.







GOVERNOR H. T. CLARK

Edgecombe County was in a condition of great excitement. In the memorable year of 1860 the State elections were held on the first Thursday in August. John W. Ellis was elected Governor of North Carolina,<sup>1</sup> and H. T. Clark, of Edgecombe, to the State Senate. After Mr. Clark was chosen president of that body, and after he assumed the position he made a conservative address, in which he pointed out the seriousness of the political situation and the necessity of caution and honesty in interpreting the will of the people. If any man was in a position to know the pulse of the people, especially in Eastern North Carolina, it was H. T. Clark. He was a man belonging to the planter class, and he knew the economic conditions as no other public man knew them. The one great problem was "Would the South have the support of the common folk in the attempt at secession because of the slavery issue?" Sentiment was equally divided during the agitation of secession. If anything there were more Union men than secessionists. This is evidenced by the larger number of votes given for Bell, of Tennessee, in the national election in November. It is not to be inferred, however, that this sentiment prevailed after North Carolina seceded from the Union.

On May 20, 1861, the State Convention met in Raleigh. This convention contained among its delegates the very ablest and most distinguished men of the State. Edgecombe sent two of the most popular and best qualified men—W. S. Battle and George Howard, Jr. Mr. Howard at the time was judge and editor of the *Tarboro Southerner*, a man of irreproachable character, possessed with strong judgment and tact. His editorials, never long and always free from partisan bitterness, were logical and pointed. He had acquired a great influence among the democracy of Edgecombe and adjoining counties. When only fourteen years of age the fame of the boy editor spread throughout the State. Before many years his editorials were copied by northern newspapers and numerous comments were made on his precociousness. In early life he was, therefore, made acquainted with the tendency of political sentiment.

The Union newspapers had by this time given up the fight to prevent secession, while Edgecombe, through the voice of both the

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<sup>1</sup> Edgecombe gave Ellis the majority vote.

*Tarboro Mercury* and the *Tarboro Southerner*, indicated plainly that the influential force of the county was for the secession cause.

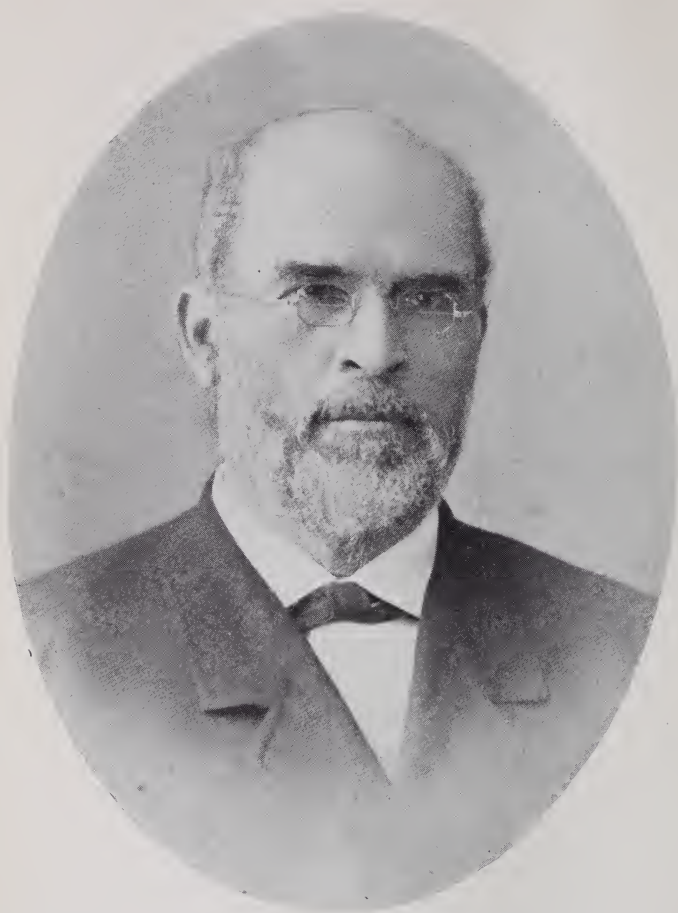
During the year 1860 R. R. Bridgers was elected to the State Legislature. Mr. Bridgers was in favor of secession. He had been a member of the House of Commons with John F. Dancy in 1856 and 1857.

War was declared, and Governor Ellis' reply to President Lincoln's call for troops voiced the sentiment of Edgecombe's political leaders, and for the most part of the Democratic party. Governor Ellis immediately called a special session of the General Assembly to meet May 1, 1861, and asked for twenty thousand volunteers, at the same announcing that War was upon the South. On the identical date that the Assembly was called a convention was called without submitting the question to the vote of the people of the State. The election of delegates took place on the 13th of May. When the day of the convention arrived the momentous question of secession necessarily had to be met squarely. Edgecombe's delegates, W. S. Battle and George Howard, faced the gravest crisis of their time.

Swayed by the multitude and pursued by the few conservatives, could any man possessed with true political principles have done other than what these two men in common with the other State delegates did for their people and State? The convention had hardly become an organization when Honorable George E. Badger presented an ordinance based on the right of the Declaration of Independence. In his draft he adroitly avoided the question of the legal right for North Carolina to secede from the Union. Observe the results. The resolution was rejected by a vote of seventy-two to forty, with the names of Battle and Howard among the majority. Edgecombe's delegates did not vote on this side because it was the majority, but because of the impending crisis. No more indication of calm logic and lack of hot secessionism could have been displayed on the part of any men. Although there was no Union party in the election of these men, the election of a president for the convention, as well as the other officers, showed that there was a division in the convention between the original secessionists and the old Union or conservative men.







ROBERT R. BRIDGERS

In the meantime the State was making hasty preparation for War. In the organization for military preparation George Howard received the honor he so richly deserved. He was appointed chairman of the convention of 1861, and also on committee of military affairs. He was also appointed on committee of annual election and sessions of the General Assembly. His duties were, therefore, to be many, since as chairman of committee on military affairs it involved the task of appointing surgeons for examination of troops, organization of regiments and the equipment of same. In addition the regulation of officers pay came under his jurisdiction, and the laws to provide for the manufacture of arms and other munitions of war. John Norfleet, also of Edgecombe, was nominated as one of the commissioners of the board of claims, the purpose of which was to prepare claims of the State against the Confederate Government on proper vouchers.

In the meantime a call was issued for election to the first Confederate Congress. Political interest was almost lacking since the absorbing thought among people was to fight. There were no State political meetings and all announcements were made in the newspapers. R. R. Bridgers being the unanimous choice of the people, he was elected to represent Edgecombe and also Wilson (this county still voting with her mother county) in the Confederate Congress for 1861. The State of North Carolina recorded a memorable day on February 4th, due to the assembling of two conventions, one in Washington City to compromise and to pacify the seceding states, and the other at Montgomery, Alabama, for the formation of the Southern Confederacy. To the latter place North Carolina choose of one of Edgecombe's most illustrious sons, John L. Bridgers. The late John L. Bridgers had for sometime enjoyed the intimacy of Governor Ellis' friendship. Accompanying him were two more of the State's noted citizens, D. L. Swain and M. W. Ransom.<sup>1</sup> They met at Montgomery, Alabama, on the 2d of February, 1861. Governor Ellis, in his letter to Honorable J. W. Garrett, of Alabama, said: "North Carolina sends three delegates to the southern convention, in compliance with the invitation of Alabama. Two of them—General Ransom and Mr. Bridgers—are warm southern men; Governor

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<sup>1</sup> These delegates were commissioned as observers and had no part in forming a Confederate States Government.

Swain has not yet taken any decided position." Governor Ellis also discredited the belief that the attempt to patch a compromise at Washington would mature, and suggested a hastening of an organization, since Mr. Lincoln would soon launch plans to subjugate the South.

The duty awaiting North Carolina delegates were therefore arduous and demanded all the ingenuity accredited to statesmen. On Wednesday, February 12th, ten days after the delegates left North Carolina, Governor Ellis received a report and a copy of the Constitution of the Confederate States of America. A complete account of what this delegation accomplished cannot be amiss at this time.

The report addressed to Governor was drafted by Honorable D. L. Swain; dated February 11, 1861, and is as follows:

"SIR:—On Wednesday, the 30th ult., we had the honor to receive our commissions under the resolutions of the General Assembly, adopted the previous day, appointing us commissioners to visit Montgomery for the purpose of effecting an honorable and amicable adjustment of all difficulties which distract the country upon the basis of the Crittenden resolutions, as modified by the Legislature of Virginia, and consulting for our common peace, honor, and safety. We left Raleigh the following evening, and arrived at this place about noon on Saturday, the 2d instant. "The resolutions of the convention of Alabama, adopted on the 11th of January, invited the people of the states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri to meet the people of the State of Alabama, by their delegates in convention, on the 4th day of February, A.D. 1861, for the purpose of consulting with each other as to the most effectual mode of securing concerted and harmonious action on whatever measures might be deemed most desirable for the common peace and security.

"The resolutions of the General Assembly, from which we derived our authority, were in response to the resolution and invitation from the convention of Alabama. On our arrival we have learned that the convention had adjourned *sine die*, and that the legislature was in session. As we were not delegates to the Southern Congress, and had no authority to participate in any

consultation in relation to the contemplated formation of either a provisional or permanent government for the seceding states, we regarded our mission as restricted to the single duty of consulting for our common peace, honor, and safety.

"On the evening of our arrival here, Saturday, 2d instant, we waited on his Excellency, Governor Moore, and exhibited our credentials. We were received with marked courtesy and kindness, and had satisfactory assurance of his disposition to afford us every facility that we could desire, and that it was in his power to extend, to aid us in the proper discharge of our duties. The legislature and judicial department of the government of Alabama also placed us under grateful obligations by repeated acts of courtesy.

"We had expected to meet commissioners from Tennessee and, perhaps, other states, clothed with like powers, and charged with performance of similar duties with ourselves, and with the hope of consulting and coöperating with them, deferred entering into communication with the Southern Congress until the third day of the session. We then addressed the following note to Honorable Howell Cobb, the president of that body:

"The undersigned have the honor to submit to the consideration of the Southern Congress the accompanying resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina on the 29th ult.'

"The following extracts from the published journals of the Congress will show the disposition made of the communication and the course pursued towards us upon its presentation:

"*Mr. Toombs*: I have the pleasure, Mr. President, of presenting a communication from the commissioners of the State of North Carolina to this body. I desire that it be read.'

"It was read, together with the accompanying resolutions of the General Assembly, and was, on motion, laid on the table for the present.

"*Mr. Toombs*: I move that the commissioners from North Carolina be invited to occupy seats on the floor during the open sessions, and that a committee of three be appointed to communicate the invitation to them. Adopted.'

"The next morning Johnson I. Hooper, Esq., the secretary of the Congress, communicated the following resolution:



“*Resolved*, That the committee who were instructed to invite Honorables David L. Swain, Matthew W. Ransom, and John L. Bridgers to seats on the floor be instructed to invite them to attend any open or secret sessions of this body at any time it may suit their convenience, for the purpose of making any communication to this body that they may desire.”

The following day, Friday, 8th, the North Carolina delegation received a similar communication from the secretary, with accompanying resolutions, as follows:

“*WHEREAS*, The people of the State of North Carolina and those of the states represented in this Congress have a common destiny, a common sympathy, a common honor, and a common danger; and, whereas, it is the opinion and earnest desire of the Congress that the State of North Carolina should be united in government with these states; be it, therefore,

“*Resolved*, That this Congress receive with pleasure the commissioners from the State of North Carolina, and hope to pursue such a course of action as shall commend itself to and induce the people of the State of North Carolina speedily to unite in our councils and in such government as shall be formed by these states.”

The North Carolina delegates' report continues:

“We availed ourselves freely of this invitation to attend the open sessions of the Congress, and of favorable opportunities to consult with the members of Congress individually, with the executive, with the members of the legislature and judicial departments of the government of Alabama, and with many prominent citizens of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi in relation to the general objects of our mission.

“The number of native North Carolinians called hither, either as members of, or anxious attendants upon the legislative bodies in session here, have afforded us unusual and most favorable opportunities to ascertain public sentiment in relation to the cause and cure of the evils which threaten the peace and safety of the whole country. These gentlemen have made their homes in the Southwest at intervals during the last thirty or forty years, constitute no small proportion of the aggregate body of the community, and, in point of wealth, intelligence, and respectability, occupy positions in society which entitle them to high considera-



tion in their native as well as their adopted states. So numerous are the instances in which they have approached us, and so full and unreserved have been their communications, that we suppose there is probably no extensive section in North Carolina in which any one of our number, by ten days of like intercourse, could satisfy himself more clearly of the direction and strength of public opinion.

"We regret to be constrained to state, as the result of our inquiries, made under such circumstances, that only a very decided minority of the community in these states are disposed at present to entertain favorably any proposition of adjustment which looks toward a reconstruction of our National Union.

"In the state of things, we have not deemed it our duty to attend any of the secret sessions of the Congress. The resolutions of the General Assembly are upon the table of the Congress, and having submitted them as a poor peace offering we would poorly perform the duties assigned us by entering into discussion, which would only serve to enkindle strife.

"We communicate herewith a copy of the 'Constitution of the Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America,' adopted on the 8th inst. General Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi, was, on the 9th, elected President and the Honorable Alexander H. Stephens, of Georgia, Vice-President of the new Confederation."

Simultaneously R. R. Bridgers was to distinguish himself in the Confederate Congress, where he served during the entire war. It was here history rewards him with having displayed the greatest characteristic and strongest element of business success. More than any other man in the State and in the South at this time, he pointed out future necessities for the Confederate Government, and he immediately proceeded to make preparations in order to meet new conditions. From the beginning of his association with the Confederate Congress he advocated what later became the only practical and safe financial policy for the Southern Confederacy. It was his idea that the South should not stop raising cotton, as it did, but rather it should increase the production, because the Confederate States, being a new government, and having no gold surplus to give stability to the currency, could receive gold in exchange for cotton. Cotton indeed was the only hope of the South to obtain credit abroad as well as at home. England, it

was agreed, would take cotton and pay the highest market price for it in gold, thus allowing the Confederacy a large influx of gold reserve and financial credit, provided a large annual crop was produced. President Davis, however, took the opposite view and adhered to the belief that by refusing to ship cotton to England the industries in that country would bring pressure to bear and cause England to come to the aid of the South. Mr. Bridgers had but few supporters in his scheme to place the Confederate Government on a sound financial basis, but later as he discussed the matter and explained the issues more thoroughly, many became convinced and endorsed his idea. Ultimately, when it became too late to execute his plans, and when exportation became hazardous, because of blockades, there grew a decided sentiment in the South that he should be appointed Secretary of the Treasury. It is authentically reported that Mr. Davis offered Mr. Bridgers the position. This burden Mr. Bridgers declined because the matter had been too long delayed and the opportunity to make it good had passed.

Toward the close of the year 1863 and during the following year, Jefferson Davis was criticized severely for his policy. In North Carolina especially a falling away from Davis' policy was conspicuous. Mr. Bridgers again showed his ability as a statesman, and wrote Governor Vance to make public his correspondence with President Davis in order that the people might appreciate the existing conditions. He did not doubt but that the people would be more lenient and less critical if the exact condition was known. It can be safely asserted that this loyal son and citizen did more than the average public man to uphold the declining arm of the Confederate Government during the awful days of 1864.

In spite of the strenuous and speedy plans of Governor Ellis to prepare for the protection of the State and property, the people were quicker than he in their military actions. Almost the entire State was in an intense state of excitement, and patriotic men everywhere were accumulating all reserve power for the coming conflict. Edgecombe began the task which resulted in endless fame for her sons, and added laurels to her tradition for which every citizen should be grateful. In 1860 Edgecombe had a population of 6,879 whites, 50 of them were of foreign birth, 389 free

negroes, and 10,108 slaves. The town of Tarboro had 453 whites, 65 free negroes, and 530 slaves, a total population of 1,048. Out of this population the county during the period of the war contributed 1,400 to the Confederate Army.

An organization which has for many years received the admiration of the people of Edgecombe—the Edgecombe Guards—was soon to write its history upon immortal pages. This organization is worthy of more than a mere mention. The date of the Edgecombe military organization reaches back almost as far as the Revolution. In all probability the results of the domestic quarrel between England and the American colonies gave the stimulation which caused its birth.

Immediately following the Revolution, it became common to effect some military organization throughout the State for the purpose of repelling invasions and to maintain domestic peace at home. The issues growing out of the Revolutionary War left many doubts in the minds of many; consequently it may not be surprising to know that as early as 1803 the legislature of North Carolina granted by law certain privileges to the Light Infantry Company of the Second Regiment in the county of Edgecombe. It gave the company full authority to make such laws, rules, and regulations for their government as they, or a majority, thought proper. However, the rules were not to conflict with the laws of North Carolina and in violation of the Constitution of the United States. The company at this period was governed by the field officers of the regiment, and was subject to orders of a battalion parade.

It appears also that there were other organizations in the county at this early date, since the law, as if a mediator between rival companies, specified that the Light Infantry was not to be subject to any other company in the county.

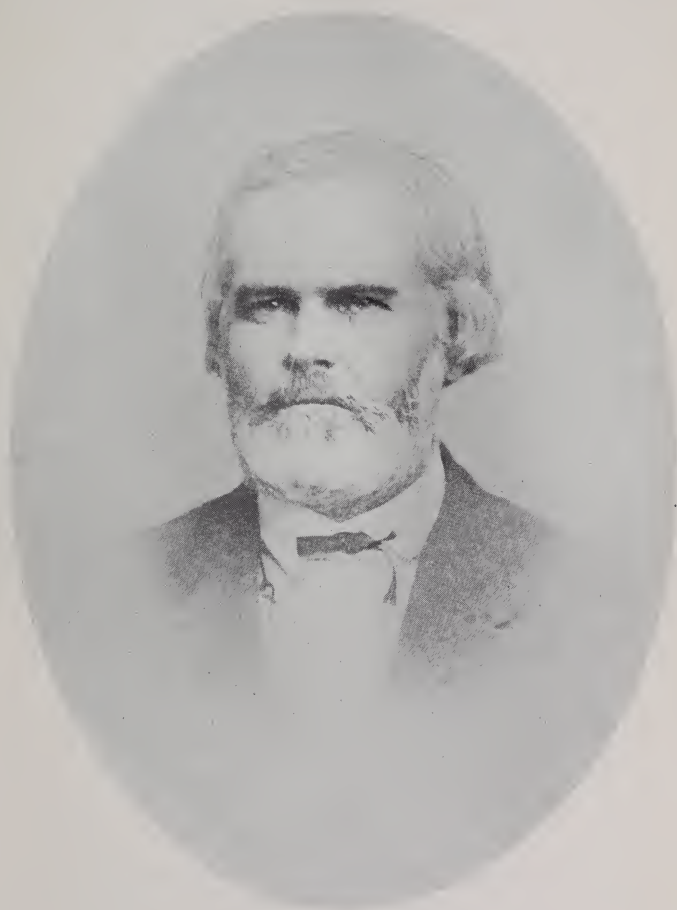
The War of 1812 confirmed the fears of many regarding the necessity for military preparedness, and from 1815 to 1840 the Edgecombe companies were the strongest in the State. In 1830 the Company of Light Infantry, commanded by Joseph R. Lloyd, of Tarboro, was incorporated under the title of "Tarboro Guards." From all accounts this was the beginning of the historic Edgecombe Guards. There was also a Company of Light Infantry in the county, in addition to the one at Tarboro, commanded by

Michael Parker. This company was also incorporated in 1833 under the name of Swift Creek Greys. Yet another company in the county commanded by Henry Dixon was incorporated under the title of the United Blues, during the same year.

The first account of any other division of military organization from that of the infantry was a company of cavalry. This company became incorporated as Edgecombe Cavalry under the command of William H. Robards in 1831. All of these companies enjoyed their own regulations and received orders for drills, company election, time for mustering, not from a collective source, but from its own individual officers. All of the companies, however, were regulated by the State, and had stated periods for muster prescribed by the State Department.

The Guards in the county had become more or less disintegrated prior to the war with Mexico, and between the termination of this War and 1850 the military spirit lay dormant. With the beginning of the year, however, the agitation for slave abolition and the hampering over fugitive slaves, gave local military organizations an impetus not only in North Carolina, but over the entire South. In 1852 the county had 43 rifles, 540 shot guns, and 53 muskets in its armory. In 1857 the Edgecombe Guards was completely reorganized under James B. Lloyd, captain; Frank B. Lloyd, first lieutenant; and John W. Chase, second lieutenant. In 1859 John L. Bridgers was unanimously elected captain and became very active in perfecting a good organization.

The Edgecombe Guards were, therefore, above the average in organization and had good equipment when the need came for their participation in 1861. In the meantime Governor Ellis issued his call for volunteers to defend the State and to pursue the War against the North. John L. Bridgers, having returned from his mission to Alabama, took command of Company A, of the Guards, which became the honor company of the First North Carolina Regiment, on April 18, 1861. The company consisted of 120 privates, nine noncommissioned officers, and four officers. Captain Bridgers on April 23, 1861, wired Governor Ellis for sixty-four Enfield rifles. Dr. J. H. Baker was attached to the company as surgeon, having left his practice at Tarboro to answer the call of duty in the Confederate service. On May 9, 1861, the company of volunteers was carried to Raleigh by



COL. JOHN L. BRIDGERS, SR.





Captain John L. Bridgers to join other companies there. Dr. J. H. Baker, of Tarboro, accompanied the company as surgeon. The companies drilled in Raleigh for about four weeks, when they were ordered to Virginia. Before their departure company officers of Company A were confirmed with John L. Bridgers, captain; Whitmel P. Lloyd, first lieutenant; William S. Long, second lieutenant; and W. G. Lewis, Jr., second lieutenant, of Company A. Dr. Baker was assigned to the regiment as assistant surgeon.

The First Regiment was immediately sent to the front after having reached Richmond in two detachments. North Carolina was still technically in the Union, while Virginia had just passed her ordinance of secession and her military establishment was not yet transferred to the Confederacy. By placing troops on Virginia soil, North Carolina executed its first real act of secession. On the 6th of June Colonel Hill took position to check the advance of the Yankees in the vicinity of Yorktown, Virginia, and took position near Big Bethel Church with the First North Carolina Regiment. Reconnaissance was made of the surrounding country with the purpose of fortifying it, but it was soon learned that the enemy had deployed and the time for action had begun. Skirmishes were continued until the day of the 9th, Captain Bridgers' company being posted in a dense wood, beyond an embankment which had been hurriedly thrown up for protection. Beyond him was a creek, and on his left a public road. He deployed his company, which was soon removed to the right of the battle line. They attacked the enemy here and recovered a howitzer belonging to the Richmond Howitzers, which had been abandoned by them in the early part of the battle. In the meantime other companies were getting the worse of the engagement, and at the orders of Colonel Magruder the regiment fell back to the entrenchment, back of Bethel Church.

At this time Colonel Hill ordered Captain Bridgers with his company out of the swamp and directed him to take position on the right of the road. Captain Bridgers crossed over the road under fire, but in an orderly manner. In crossing over he drove the Federals out of an advanced battery and reoccupied it. This company and Captain Ross, with Company C, decided the results of the battle and gave the Confederates the odds. Colonel Magruder said in his hasty report made the day of the engagement:

"Whilst it may seem invidious to speak particularly of any regiment or corps, where all behaved so well, I am compelled to express my great appreciation of the skill and gallantry of Major Randolph and his howitzer battalion and Colonel Hill, the men and officers of the North Carolina Regiment. As an instance of the latter, I will merely state that a gun under the gallant Captain Brown, of the howitzer battery, having been rendered unfit for service by the breaking of a priming wire in the vent, Captain Brown threw it over the precipice and the work was occupied for a moment by the enemy. Captain Bridgers, of the North Carolina Regiment, in the most gallant manner, retook it and held it until Captain Brown had replaced it and put in position another piece, and defended it with his infantry in the most gallant manner." Colonel Magruder made a fuller report, dated June 12th, and he again refers to the subject by saying:

"I cannot omit to again bring to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief of the valuable services and gallant conduct of the First North Carolina Regiment. The officers were not only prompt and daring in the execution of their duties, but most industrious and energetic in the preparation of the conflict. Captain Bridgers, of the North Carolina Regulars, retook in the most daring manner, and at a critical period of the fight, the nest from which Captain Brown, of the artillery, had withdrawn a disabled gun to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. Captain Bridgers deserves the highest praise for this timely act of gallantry."

There were two critical turns in this battle. One when Company B, reinforced by a part of Companies C, G, and H, repulsed Winthrope's strong and menacing attack. The other when Captain Bridgers made the fearless attack across the road and retook the position from which the Confederate troops had withdrawn. Military history holds the view that if either one of these crisis had failed the enemy would have gained the victory.

In the meantime the incident of Henry L. Wyatt's death, the first to be killed on either side, had occurred. Wyatt was a native of Virginia, born in Richmond, February 12, 1842, a son of Isham and Lucinda Wyatt. Young Wyatt had been apprenticed to the carpenter's trade, and in October, 1856, he moved with his father to Edgecombe County. He was working at his trade in





HENRY LAWSON WYATT



Tarboro when the war broke out, and when the Edgecombe Guards was organized April 18, 1861, Henry Wyatt enlisted as a private soldier.

During the skirmishes which were taking place and when Captain Bridgers had charged across the road and recaptured the entrenchment, he saw a regiment of the enemy in line of battle three hundred yards away, with a house between them. Up to this time there had been no casualties and the battle was just beginning. Captain Bridgers' company began firing, but their fire was not returned. It was thought that an order to retreat had been given to the Federals. The house referred to, Big Bethel Church, was affording the enemy protection. In the meantime Colonel Hill asked Captain Bridgers if he couldn't have the house burned. Captain Bridgers accordingly asked if five of the company would volunteer to burn it, suggesting that one of the number should be an officer. Corporal George T. Williams volunteered to be the officer, and Thomas Fallon, John H. Thorpe, Henry L. Wyatt, R. H. Bradley, and R. H. Ricks said they would go with him. Matches and a hatchet were received, and immediately the party climbed over the breastworks. An act of this kind was exceedingly dangerous, since the space between the opposing forces was exposed to the enemy's guns. The party had scarcely leaped over the breastworks when a volley of fire struck them, coming not toward their front, but from the road on their left. The men being drilled in skirmishing, suddenly dropped to the ground with Wyatt fatally wounded. The others were recalled, and the church destroyed by shell fire. Wyatt was the only Confederate dead with several wounded, while the North lost more than one hundred and fifty killed and two hundred and fifty wounded. Young Wyatt was about twenty years old, and although there were many more of Edgecombe's best citizens who lost their lives, none are held in more esteem than Henry Wyatt. His body was carried to Yorktown the night after the battle. He died soon afterwards, and was buried in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia.

Colonel Magruder gave the report of Wyatt as follows: "Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the heroic soldier whom we lost. He died pierced in the forehead by a musket ball. Henry L. Wyatt is the name of this brave soldier and devoted patriot." Camps were named in his honor during the war, his portrait is

now to be seen in the State Library at Raleigh. A chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy is also named in his honor at Selma, North Carolina.

Captain Bridgers won admiration from his commanding officer, and was cited for his action in the Battle of Bethel. The citation won for him a promotion to lieutenant-colonel of heavy artillery, Tenth Regiment, C. S. A., on August 16, 1861; and afterwards became colonel of the regiment.

The Tenth Regiment was the First Regular Artillery, and comprised five companies of heavy artillery stationed at Fort Macon and five companies of light artillery. Some of the companies were garrisoned at Fort Macon and the breastworks extended several miles from there under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Bridgers. During his command Captain W. H. Parker, of the Confederate States Navy, on an inspection tour visited the fort, and in his book, "Recollections of a Naval Officer," says: "Upon our arrival at Fort Macon we were received with great joy by Colonel Bridgers, the officer in command. The colonel had distinguished himself at the battle of Bethel as a captain, had been promoted, and placed in command of Fort Macon. As he himself said, he knew nothing about heavy artillery or the defense of fortified places. 'I only know,' said he, 'that the flag must not come down,' and no one who knew this gallant man could doubt that it would only be lowered after a desperate defense, if at all. The colonel received me as the ordnance officer most cordially. 'Now,' he remarked, 'my mind is at rest'; and I am sure that as soon as he felt that his men had been properly instructed and that his ammunition was all right, he would have welcomed the presence of an attacking force." The attack was later made several times, and each time repulsed. At that time he had been made colonel of the Tenth Artillery Regiment. He tendered his resignation of account of the condition of his health, and at his own request was relieved of the duties at Fort Macon. He returned home after being succeeded by Colonel Moses G. White. He afterwards served on the staff of Lieutenant-General D. N. Hill.

In the meantime the Edgecombe Company had been reorganized, with Whitmel P. Lloyd as captain, W. G. Lewis, first lieutenant, and Kenneth Wiggins, Jr., second lieutenant. The organization

soon disbanded, however, due to the fact that the First Regiment was made up of volunteers who had enlisted for a period of six months.

Captain Lloyd organized a battery and remained with the Tenth Regiment, being assigned with the five companies composing the Light Artillery, and later with Company A, known as "Ellis' Light Artillery." His battery went to Smithfield, Virginia, and was attached to General John C. Pemberton's brigade. It drilled there and at Todd's Point. On March 8, 1862, it crossed the James River and reported to General Magruder at Yorktown. Its first engagement was in April at Dam No. 1, and soon afterwards at Warwick Island. There were, however, no casualties on either side. On its retreat from Yorktown the company was attached to Simm's brigade, which fought at the battle of Williamsburg. The company remained at Williamsburg, occupying Fort Magruder, and then joined the general retreat to Richmond. On approaching Chickahominy an engagement with the enemy was made and his advance checked. After the battle in the vicinity of Richmond the company consolidated with the army which marched into Maryland, August, 1862. The troops marched through Culpepper, Warrenton, Harper's Ferry and Crampton's Gap. At the latter place it had a small skirmish, and also at Sharpsburg the 16th and the 17th of September. The army then returned to Virginia and stopped at Winchester, where Captain Lloyd's battery, of Tarboro, was disbanded. Captain Lloyd was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the State Reserves, but immediately resigned and returned home. He was regarded as being a born soldier and a man of considerable ability.

Among those to win distinction was William Gaston Lewis, who had been appointed first lieutenant of the Edgecombe Volunteers after the promotion of Captain Bridgers. During the battle of Bethel he took a prominent part as second lieutenant. During the retreat he lead the Confederate sharpshooters against the retreating Federals. Following the Battle of Bethel he was recommended for promotion, and upon the organization of the Thirty-third North Carolina Regiment he was appointed major dating from January 17, 1862. General Branch in his account of the battles below Newbern and around Kinston in March, 1862, reported that Lieutenant-Colonel Hoke and Major Lewis fought

against overwhelming odds and performed their duty fully. Major Lewis took part in the battle at Slash Church or Hanover Court House, May 27, 1861, and Fort Thompson, where he commanded the left wing of the line of battle and also at Cedar Run.

On April 25, 1862, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel of the Forty-third Regiment North Carolina troops and assigned to General Daniel's brigade. The regiment, after its organization, was ordered to Wilmington and then Fort Johnson at Smithfield. It remained here under command of General French for about a month, when it was ordered to Virginia. Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis, being a civil engineer by profession, was ordered by his brigade commander to supervise the construction of the breast-works around Drewry's Bluff. The regiment at the approach of winter was ordered to Goldsboro, arriving there December 2, 1862, to reinforce Confederate troops against the forces led by General Foster. The Federals succeeded in burning the bridge over the Neuse River and retreated to their base at Newbern. The bridge was immediately repaired by a detail from Daniel's brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis supervising. The regiment went to Washington and had skirmishes there, after which it returned to its former quarters at Kinston, and later went to Fredericksburg, Virginia. The Forty-third Regiment was then transferred to Rhodes Division of the Second Corps.

After a review of the army by General Lee the march to Pennsylvania began in June of that memorable year, 1863. The line of march was through Martinsburg, Williamsport, Hagerstown, and Chambersburg to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It left the latter place and returned to Gettysburg. The brigade formed a line of battle here July 1, 1863, near Forney's house. In this battle Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis gained additional distinction. The fight, which began in the afternoon, lasted until late in the evening, the brigade being led by General Daniel. Seminary Ridge was captured and occupied, but with a tremendous loss on both sides. General Lee and staff were personal witnesses of the battle, and encouraged the men. During the battle Colonel Kenan, of the Forty-third Regiment, was wounded in leading a charge, and was captured and held by the Federal soldiers. The command fell upon Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis.







GEN. GASTON LEWIS

In giving his report of this battle General Daniel made special mention of the service of Colonel Lewis, saying that he acted with bravery and coolness. After the three day's battle at Gettysburg the Forty-third Regiment moved to Hagerstown, where it engaged the Federal sally from the rear position of the retreat. It remained at Hagerstown for a few days, and then crossed the Potomac to the town of Darksville. Colonel Lewis commanded the Forty-third Regiment at the battle of Mine Run. Here several minor engagements took place and the regiment was consolidated with General Hoke's brigade for the winter campaign in Eastern North Carolina in 1863 and 1864.

In approaching Newbern, near Bachelor's Creek, a night attack was made against the Federal breastworks. In doing this it was learned that the flooring of a bridge had been removed. Colonel Lewis asked permission to repair the bridge in order that he might attack. General Hoke complied, and one company did the necessary repairing under fire, and the attack was made at daybreak, driving the enemy in a retreat to Newbern, a distance of seven miles.

After an unsuccessful attempt to capture a train of cars on the way to Newbern to transport Federal troops, the Forty-third Regiment, under command of Colonel Lewis, fell back to Kinston for a few weeks and then marched to Plymouth. The battle of Plymouth, April 18th to 20th, 1864, was of notable interest. General Hoke had been given command of the entire forces, with Colonel Lewis still commanding the Forty-third Regiment. Plans of coöperation were made with the Confederate Navy to rescue the "Albemarle," then on the Roanoke River. Colonel Mercer,<sup>1</sup> commanding Hoke's brigade, was killed in the charge on the night of the 18th and Colonel Lewis assumed command, and was immediately promoted to brigadier general. The fort was captured with the assistance of the "Albemarle" in sinking Federal gunboats. On the morning of the 20th, General Lewis occupied the western portion of the town and assisted in its capture.

General Lewis's next scene of action was around Washington, North Carolina, and then at Drewry's Bluff, Virginia, May 16, 1864. He still remained in charge of Hoke's old brigade. In writing of the battle of Drewry's Bluff, General Ransom, commanding,

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel Mercer is buried in the Episcopal Church yard at Tarboro.

comments especially on the services of General Lewis's command, which he reported was led so gallantly at the "double-quick" against the enemy.

During the year 1864 General Lewis and his brigade were in Northern Virginia and took part in the struggles with Ransom's and Early's divisions. He was with Early in the historic valley of Virginia and engaged in the battles around Petersburg. It was during the battle of Farmville that he received his first wound. He was ordered by his commander to move on Farmville. It being discovered that the Federal troops were there and destroying bridges. On their approach the Federal army began firing with artillery. In the morning, however, the enemy had abandoned their position. General Humphreys, major-general of the Federal forces, in writing about the incident, said: "I regret to report that Brigadier General Lewis, commanding brigade, Walker's Division, Gordon's Corps, of the Confederate Army, severely wounded, together with other wounded, were left in our hands by the enemy." This happened one day before the surrender at Appomattox.

The Confederate officers thought him dead upon the battlefield. He was one of the youngest brigadier-generals in the southern army and was several times complimented by General Lee. He recovered from his wound and became chief engineer of the North Carolina State Guards, which position he held until his death, January 7, 1901.

Dr. J. H. Baker, after the disbanding of the First North Carolina Regiment, was given charge of the Confederate hospital at Tarboro. He returned to his home to assume charge, where he remained, except for intervals, throughout the war. He was at the battle of Plymouth and assisted in administering medical aid to the wounded in several minor engagements in North Carolina. It was his unfortunate duty to be present at Appomattox during the termination of the civil strife.

The original First Regiment of North Carolina troops contributed some valuable assistance to the cause of the South. Edgecombe County's part in this regiment was made notable by John Luther Bridgers, William Gaston Lewis, Whitmel P. Lloyd, of the Bethel Regiment. J. H. Thorpe, of Rocky Mount, and a member of the Edgecombe Guards, and one of the number who

volunteered to burn the house obstructing the fire of the Confederates at Bethel, rose most rapidly from the ranks. Thorpe was a graduate of the State University and a man of considerable promise when he enlisted in Captain Bridgers's company. After the battle of Bethel he was promoted from the ranks to lieutenant and later became captain of Nash County Volunteers.

The name of William Dorsey Pender ever lives in the hearts of brave and loyal men. Possessed with the calm and courageous bearing, he was, of all Edgecombe's loyal men, the one around whom military history has its glory. He gave more than others who did not lose their all. His gift was precious, because in his loss the Confederacy lost a noble leader and Edgecombe a precious son.

He was born in Edgecombe County, February 6, 1834, the son of James Pender, a descendant of Edwin Pender, of Norfolk, Virginia. Dorsey Pender attended the United States Military Academy and graduated in 1854, in the class of which Custis Lee, Stephen D. Lee, J. E. B. Stuart, and others of military fame, were members. His military experience prior to the war between the States was both varied and useful. He at first received a commission in the artillery, and in 1855 he received permission to be transferred to the First Dragoons. In 1858 he received a promotion to first lieutenant. During his service in the United States Army he had had several encounters with the Indians, an active experience in New Mexico, California, Washington, and Oregon with the Apaches, and the original natives around Four Lakes and Spokane Plains. In 1860 he was adjutant of his regiment and also acted in the capacity of recruiting officer in Pennsylvania.

In appearance he was not unlike his fellow-leaders from Edgecombe. His manner was pleasing and gentle. He walked with a stately motion, was a gentleman, cultivated, unaffected, and above all a good friend to his fellowman. The idea that one could not be tender at heart and at the same time maintain discipline was without foundation. No man ever received more touching tribute from his former comrades than did Pender.

Realizing the conditions that existed in his State, he returned in 1859, and soon afterwards resigned his commission and accepted a captaincy in the Corps of Artillery in the Confederate



Army. His first duties were as recruiting officer at Baltimore. Orders had been given General Beauregard, at Charleston, to detail an officer to Baltimore for special service. Through some misunderstanding the officer never appeared. General L. P. Walker, Secretary of War, upon being apprised of the fact by Honorable L. T. Wigfall, wrote him that Captain Pender would be sent as inspector of recruits and to superintend the enlistment of men. War had not yet been declared, but all indications pointed that way, and the Confederate States were preparing. Captain Pender, after a few weeks, was removed from Maryland and stationed at Raleigh, where he became drill master in the spring of 1861. Brigadier General Cox received instructions from him in that year.

May 16, 1861, found him moved still nearer the scene of actual encounter, when he was stationed as post commandant at Garysburg. He became chief mustering officer for all the companies stationed at his camp. Prior to this, however, Captain Pender expressed his desire to resign and to become actively in service. On May 17, 1861, a few days after he had stated his desire by letter to Governor Ellis, he was advised that the Governor wanted him to remain at camp as instructor, since if he left camp it would have to be abandoned. The Thirteenth North Carolina Regiment was organized on this date, which marks the beginning of his active military career. Three of the companies which constituted the regiment had been sent to Garysburg and were being drilled under Captain Pender immediately after the State seceded. While at Garysburg the ten companies which constituted the Regiment organized and elected W. D. Pender colonel. This regiment was then known as the Third North Carolina Volunteers, and was completed in organization May 16, 1861. Among the ten companies was Company G, an Edgecombe organization, with J. H. Hyman captain. The regiment was sworn in the service for twelve months. Soon afterwards the regiment took the oath for the duration of the War and had its name changed to the Thirteenth Regiment, North Carolina troops.

The regiment was stationed at Suffolk, Virginia, until June of 1861, when it marched to Ragged Island and camped six miles from Smithfield, Virginia. For several weeks the regiment remained here and did picket duty along the James River opposite



Newport News. During the month of September, 1861, Colonel Pender resigned his command of the Thirteenth Regiment and was given Fisher's old regiment, the Sixth North Carolina, at Manassas. Colonel Pender took command of the Sixth Regiment at Bull Run immediately after the famous battle. In order to be in a safer location, the camp was moved to near Bristow Station of now historic fame. The regiment had suffered from sickness and disease, and as winter was approaching it went into winter quarters at Freestone Point, near Dunfries. Except for the picket duty the winter proved uneventful. About the 8th of March, 1862, the winter camp was burned with an immense amount of baggage, and the troops were transferred to Fredericksburg.

During the latter part of March a large number of Federal troops under McClellan were being moved down the Potomac, when the Sixth Regiment received orders to move towards Richmond. While in the process of advancing, orders came for the formation of a battle line, but no engagement occurred. The regiment, although it was in readiness, missed the battle of Williamsburg and the skirmish at Yorktown. The first encounter took place at Barhamsville or Eltham's Landing. The enemy was prevented from landing by gunboats in York River.

The regiment assisted then in a defense camp around Richmond, where it remained until the fight at Seven Pines, where the Federals made a persistent stand. While in this engagement Colonel Pender exercised the quickness of a true soldier. He was in danger at the flank and rear of his regiment by Federal troops. In an instant he saved his command by shouting, "By the left flank, file right, double-quick." His regiment was excellently drilled, and, without a mistake, executed the order and thereby escaped the danger of the Federal formation. A brigade adjacent to him was suffering the worse of the engagement and had its forces repulsed. Colonel Pender, with judicious calmness, reorganized its ranks. President Davis was upon the field of battle and witnessed the ability of Colonel Pender. He turned to Pender and said, "General Pender, I salute you." Subsequently Colonel Pender became brigadier general and assumed command of General Pettigrew's brigade. Beginning June 3d he was given a greater opportunity to distinguish himself further.

General Pender's assignment of the Sixth Brigade included the Second Arkansas Battalion, Sixteenth North Carolina, Twenty-second North Carolina, Thirty-fourth North Carolina, Thirty-eighth North Carolina, and the Twenty-second Virginia battalions. He led his men at Beaver Dam and suffered heavy fire at Cold Harbor, and at Cedar Run he proved the tactician that he was and became the pivot upon which defeat was turned into victory. At second Manassas his sword was applied with soldierly force, and here he received a wound. At Mechanicsville he made a decided stand in an attempt to turn the enemy's left for a decisive advantage. At Fredericksburg he received a second wound and praise for himself and all his men. His brigade had been roughly handled when Major General Hill met him. He requested assistance of two more regiments of Riley's brigade to turn the position at Ellison's Mill. He received the coöperation of General Riley, and about dark the attack was made through an open plain against a well-fortified embankment. Immediately following this General Pender received another wound at the battle of Frazier's Farm. In this engagement General Pender lost eight hundred men. The Federals, however, testified to his fighting qualities.

By July, 1862, General Pender was in "Stonewall" Jackson's Division, commanding five regiments. In the meantime General Lee had written General Hill to relieve two brigades—that of Pender and of Lane. An explanation of this was probably the fact that the two brigades were to be sent to North Carolina for the protection of Wilmington. On November 21, 1862, Brigadier General Whiting wrote the Secretary of War that in event of the general movements of the enemy causing a concentration of the army near Richmond and a transfer of the troops to North Carolina he desired the brigade of Pender and his troops. The facts, however, in the case were soon disclosed in a letter of General Lee's to President Davis. The order for the release of the two brigades was suspended. General Lee wrote:

"I was surprised to learn from General A. P. Hill on my return that the other two North Carolina brigades, Pender's and Lane's, which had been ordered off, were delighted at the suspension of their order. They did not wish to go to North Carolina." The letter was written January 23, 1863, from Camp Fredericksburg, where the army was in winter quarters.

The next engagement of any consequence that General Pender took active part was at Chancellorsville in the early part of the year 1863. It was here that General Jackson received a fatal wound and was relying on General Pender, who had been a faithful soldier under his command for several months. It is recorded that General Pender was so reserved in demeanor that General Jackson only knew him for his gallantry in battle, the discipline of his troops, and the orderly appearance of his camp.

At Chancellorsville General Jackson, after receiving his wound, recognized General Pender through the darkness, and said, "You must hold your ground, General Pender, you must hold your ground, sir." From the account of General Lee, General Pender held his ground, for in his report he recorded that "General Pender led his brigade to the attack under a destructive fire, bearing the colors of a regiment in his own hands up to and over the entrenchments, with the most distinguished gallantry."

Immediately after the wounding of General A. P. Hill, General Pender took command of the "Light Division," receiving a slight wound while in battle. General Lee recommended that he be permanently assigned to this command, because of his qualities as an officer, "attentive, industrious, and brave, and has been conspicuous in every battle, and I believe wounded in most all of them." He was accordingly promoted to major general May 27, 1863, at the age of twenty-nine, but experienced in the school of war and hardships.

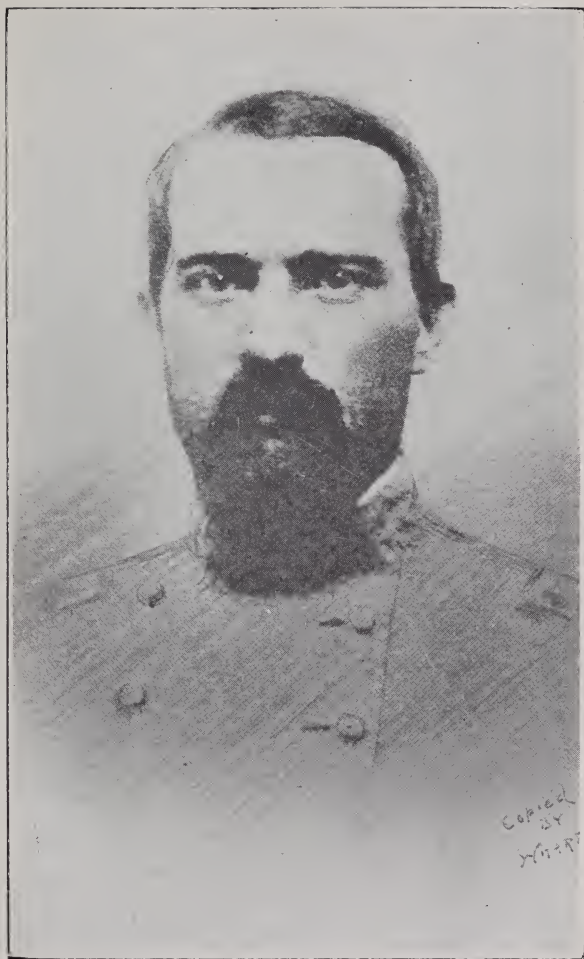
General Pender is best known for his activities, although of short duration, while in command of the "Light Division." Every one knew of him in the Army of Northern Virginia. He was quick to move, alert and forceful, as he was impetuous in attacking an enemy. He had the reputation of being never late. His reputation gained credence the few weeks he was actively in command. It was commonly circulated among the army in Virginia that General Lee said Pender was the only man in his army that could fill the place of "Stonewall" Jackson.

General Pender's first great battle after his promotion was at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It was here he met an untimely death.

On July 1st his division had attacked the enemy and driven him from Seminary Ridge. During the second day General Pender, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis, whose command rested on the left of Pender's division, and Major Englehard were reclining on a large rock pleasantly passing jocular remarks, when a terrific artillery fire opened up from Cemetery Hill and struck the Confederate lines. An eye witness relates that General Pender, in a most quiet and unassuming manner, raised up and said, "Major, this indicates an assault on our lines, and we will ride to the center of the division." The group rode off preliminary to an attack on Cemetery Hill, and had reached half the distance to the center of the division when General Pender was struck in his leg by a fragment of a shell. He survived the retreat to Staunton, where his leg was amputated July 18th, with subsequent death. His body lies in the beautiful Calvary churchyard at Tarboro, the town which still cherishes his memory.

General G. C. Wharton stated that in a conversation between A. P. Hill and himself General Lee said, "I ought not to have fought the battle of Gettysburg; it was a mistake. But the stakes were so great I was compelled to play; for if we had succeeded, Harrisburg, Baltimore, and Washington were in our hands; and we would have succeeded had Pender lived." The official records give testimony to General Lee's appreciation of his worth as a soldier and as a man. "The loss of Major General Pender," he writes, "is severely felt by the army and the country. He served with this army from the beginning of the war, and took a distinguished part in all its engagements. Wounded on several occasions, he never left his command in action until he received the injury which caused his death. His promise and usefulness as an officer were only equaled by the purity and excellence of his private life." This excellent citizen and soldier has been honored by his county and State. Pender County, North Carolina, has been named in his honor, while the local chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy bears his name. Mrs. L. L. Staton, of Tarboro, contributed a memorial poem in his honor which was read at a meeting of the William Dorsey Pender Chapter, February 3,





GEN. W. D. PENDER





1915. When General Pender's body was moved to Tarboro for reinterment, a beautiful poem, contributed by William Loftin Hargrave, was sung at the grave. It is worthy of permanent record. "*Dulce et decorum est, pro Patria mori.*"<sup>1</sup>

"Soldier, while the Spring so balmy,  
Sighs in fragrance o'er thy head,  
While thou sleepest on so calmly,  
Loving hands adorn thy bed.  
Let these flowers tell thy story,  
Bright and brief in dying—blest  
Let them breathe, *Pro Patria mori,*  
*Dulce et decorum est.*

"In our hearts we proudly cherish,  
Recollections of thy worth;  
Noble deeds can never perish—  
Virtue has immortal birth.  
Lost to us—but not to glory!  
Warrior, in thine honor rest!  
Sweetly rest! *Pro Patria mori,*  
*Dulce et decorum est.*

"Brighter flowers, noble Pender,  
Mem'ry weaves around thy name.  
Son of Southland—brave defender,  
Love is dearer still than Fame.  
Rest thee—in thy garments gory,  
War's grim emblem on thy breast,  
Rest in peace! *Pro Patria mori,*  
*Dulce et decorum est."*

One of the saddest regrets in Edgecombe's history is that no monument has been erected to perpetuate his heroic deeds. The State has also shown its indifference during fifty-six years. A memorial window in Calvary Church enshrines his memory, his grave is marked by a circle of cannon balls placed as a sad memorial by the Edgecombe Guards.

Brigadier General William Ruffin Cox's activities belong to Edgecombe County beginning with 1857. He moved to Edgecombe in this year and became extensively engaged in agriculture. In 1861, when times were excitable and pulses ran high, he contributed his knowledge and services to the State. He was a man

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<sup>1</sup> Horace Odes 3—213. It is sweet and glorious to die for one's country.

of good education, having been admitted to the bar to practice law. His first service was the assistance rendered in organizing "Ellis Artillery" Company and later organizing a company of infantry. In the meantime he had been commissioned by Governor Ellis major of the Second Regiment of North Carolina troops. This regiment soon entered active service. He was at Chancellorsville and at Cold Harbor. At Sharpsburg the well-beloved Colonel C. C. Tew was killed, and when Judge W. P. Bynum was advanced next in command Cox was appointed lieutenant-colonel. Soon afterwards Bynum resigned and Cox became colonel of the regiment in March, 1863. The part that the Second Regiment played was indeed heroic, having achieved imperishable honors. Acting in command of the regiment Colonel Cox moved into the valley of Virginia. In the spring of 1863 Colonel Cox moved to Chancellorsville driving the enemy from his outposts. They camped so near the enemy that night all orders were given in whispers. Saturday night the charge was made by General Jackson's Corps, when Cox's regiment halted a few feet from Generals Lee and Jackson. Immediately afterwards the Second Regiment was ordered to charge. The order was misunderstood by some. Seven companies of the regiment charged, but going at different directions, the left end going far beyond the breastworks, while the right never reached it. The cause for the trouble was an order given by General Ramsuer. As he neared the Second Regiment, he said: "Forward, Second." The three captains stood half faced to the right observing Cox, who was waiting for his command. The men were at high tension when General Ramsuer said: "Forward at once." The three companies got the command first and dashed away at top speed. Cox, taking in the situation, led the remaining companies and succeeded in driving the enemy from his works and silenced his guns. In this battle he was wounded three times.

The next engagement was at Gettysburg, July 1, 1863, but Cox was absent from his regiment on account of his wounds. General Ramsuer paid him a high compliment for his services and named him "the manly and chivalrous Cox."

Cox rejoined his command when it returned from Pennsylvania and took part in the Wilderness and Spottsylvania battles in 1864. After these battles, under command of General Ramsuer,





GEN. W. R. COX



Lee, and Ewell, he was promoted to brigadier general. His old regiment remained in his brigade. He fought in Early's Division at Castleman's Ford, Winchester, Fisher's Mill and Cedar Creek. His brigade became known as Cox's brigade from the battle of Spottsylvania. His brigade captured more prisoners at Winchester than it numbered and harrassed thousands in retreat.

His brigade fought through Maryland to Washington and the Shenandoah battle of the fall of 1864. He then returned to the battle-scarred field of Northern Virginia, where he waited around Petersburg and took part in the attempt of Gordon's Corps to pierce the enemy's lines at Fort Stedman. It was on this retreat Cox displayed his best soldiership. Governor Vance related that one day during a retreat to the West, when General Lee was taxed to get in line some routed troops, he became elated by the appearance of a small but well organized brigade. He called out to his aide: "What troops are those?" "Cox's North Carolina brigade," was the reply. General Lee took off his hat and with bowed head said, "God bless North Carolina."

From Petersburg the brigade went to Appomattox, where General Cox led the division in the last charge after ordering his brigade to cover the retreat. His men who were retiring were exhausted and well spent, but Cox ordered a halt and a command of "Right about face" was given. With the promptness of veterans they returned and fired a deadly volley into the Federal ranks. Once more the firm Cox ordered, "Ready, aim, fire." This was the last volley fired by any troop of the Army of Northern Virginia. Defeated but not conquered the gallant Cox bore his eleven wounds and laid down his sword with the soldierly grace of a true hero.

Although the career and achievements of Edgecombe's sons were of conspicuous interest, its military history centers around the performance of its organizations. The county contributed several companies to the service of the Confederate States and many notable events are credited to their achievements. The various companies in the North Carolina Regiments, its officers and part taken in battles, are given in order named:

Company A in First North Carolina or Bethel has already been given. The companies assigned to North Carolina regiments are as follows: Company C, Eighth Regiment; Companies A, C, D,

Tenth Regiment; Company G, Thirteenth Regiment; Companies I and K, Fifteenth Regiment; Company I, Seventeenth Regiment; Company F, Thirtieth Regiment; Company F, Thirty-first Regiment; Company B, Thirty-third Regiment; Company F, Fortieth Regiment; Company E, Forty-third Regiment; Company B, Forty-fourth Regiment, and Company I, of the Seventy-fifth Regiment.

Company C of the Eighth North Carolina Regiment was originally made up from the counties of Edgecombe, Franklin, and New Hanover, and was organized at Warrenton, North Carolina, August and September, 1861. Charles H. Barron, of Edgecombe, was commissioned first lieutenant, May 16, 1861, and was promoted to captain February 1, 1863. William J. Baker, of Edgecombe, was second corporal, having enlisted July 9, 1861. J. B. Hill, a private, was soon promoted to sergeant. The county contributed thirty-nine privates out of the total number of ninety-one, in addition to an officer and two noncommissioned officers. The company was mustered in the Eighth Regiment September 13th by Colonel Robert Ramson, for the entire war. It received instruction in a camp near Warrenton, and was stationed on Roanoke Island where fortifications were built. In October the regiment embarked on barges to the sound to attack an enemy force along the sea coast at Chicamacomico. The attack was made on October 4th and the entire camp and fifty-five prisoners were captured. It remained around Hatteras and Fort Bartow until February, 1862, when an enemy fleet entered Pamlico Sound and bombarded Fort Bartow, when the regiment retired to the north of the island. The island surrendered, and the Eighth Regiment held as prisoners of war and paroled two weeks later. The regiment reassembled September, 1862, one year after its organization, with its former companies remaining intact. It became a part of General F. L. Clingman's brigade, and was stationed around Kinston, Wilmington, and Newbern, spending the winter at Camp Whiting at Goldsboro. At Goldsboro Lieutenant Barron was promoted to captain of Company C. In February the regiment was ordered to Charleston, South Carolina, and later to Savannah, Georgia. It later returned to Charleston and then to Wilmington. It saw its first real service on its return to Charleston, July 13, 1863. Here it fought against an ironclad

fleet and was given a severe bombardment. They were sieged fifty-eight days at Battery Wagner and suffered undue hardships, the men working night and day.

When the regiment returned to North Carolina in December the organization was sent to Petersburg, Virginia, and slept in the streets the night of December 14, 1863. It remained in camp near here to January 29, 1864. It left Petersburg without a fight and returned to Goldsboro, thence to Kinston and later made an attack at Newbern. It was then returned to Petersburg, and then fought at Suffolk, Virginia. It left here for Plymouth by way of Weldon, Rocky Mount, and Tarboro, by railroad. From Tarboro the regiment marched to Plymouth. It finally returned to Petersburg and assisted in preventing the capture of that city. It fought at Cold Harbor, loosing 275 officers and men. The regiment received the news of Lee's surrender while in Randolph County.

Companies A, C, D were in the famous battery known as the Sixteenth Regiment Artillery, which were stationed at Fort Macon and under command of Lieutenant-Colonel John L. Bridgers. Companies A, C, and D were three of the five companies of light artillery. Company A had about fifty privates, with J. H. Payne as second lieutenant, all of Edgecombe. Payne was commissioned March 1, 1862, and soon promoted to first lieutenant. H. P. Lyon enlisted March 1, 1862, as seventh sergeant, was promoted to second lieutenant March, 1862, and was assigned to the Thirty-third regiment. H. Slack enlisted in March, 1862, as eighth sergeant and was promoted to fourth sergeant. W. T. Bryan, seventh corporal, enlisted March, 1862, while C. Zoeller was artificer.

Company C had only a few of Edgecombe soldiers and no officers, while Company D had about thirty men from Edgecombe. E. W. Wilcox and John Reggs were sergeants and J. W. Pittman a corporal. These companies saw service at Newbern and were captured and paroled not to take up arms again until properly exchanged. In 1862 an exchange was made, and Major Poole, with his command, went to Tarboro and fifty men under Captains McRae and Cobb joined his force. These two men received honor for themselves and company. In 1863 these companies were used in the Seventeenth Regiment to repel a supposed Federal force

between Tarboro and Williamston. The rumor was unfounded and the companies were returning when the force had a railroad accident between Tarboro and Rocky Mount. More than twenty men were wounded and war equipment, men, and cars piled together. The mail train for Tarboro arrived and took the wounded to the Confederate hospital at that place. The crew was placed under command of Lieutenant James H. Pool. Two of the men were injured for life. Major Pool remained at Tarboro, establishing quarters, under instruction of General Bragg, to collect supplies for General Johnson's army, to protect Confederate stores and to protect public property. On the 21st of April the forces of Schofield, composing an entire army corps, advanced this way to form a junction with Sherman's army. All supplies and about 800 bales of cotton were sent to Halifax and Goldsboro. Three hundred bales were left on account of the lack of transportation and were burned on order of General Bragg.

A battallion of these companies was ordered to Rocky Mount to meet the Federals there, but being late the Union forces burned the cotton mills and railroad bridge at that place. The mill was the oldest of the South and constituted a great loss, as will be explained later. The companies remained around Eastern North Carolina and established its headquarters in Tarboro, March 22, 1865. Major Pool remained here until April 10th, when Fort Branch was destroyed, bridges burned over Tar River, thus giving cause for the consolidation of troops at Halifax. On April 7th the command encamped near Tarboro on Tar River. No provisions could be secured, since the people of the county had given to exhaustion. A council was formed to determine what plan to pursue, and Lieutenant-Colonel Guion and Captain Cogdell went to Goldsboro to draw up the terms of surrender.

Company A of the Thirteenth Regiment has a remarkable history. The company was organized by Captain J. H. Hyman and went to Garysburg, North Carolina, where it will be remembered General Pender was instructor. Later Captain Hyman began to rise in the ranks, first becoming major of the Thirteenth Regiment, March 2, 1862; lieutenant-colonel, October 16, 1862; and colonel, January 13, 1863. He had a very brilliant military career and remained with the Thirteenth Regiment from the beginning until his wound at Gettysburg, July 1, 1863. Captain



Hyman was commissioned captain of Company G, May 1, 1861. He saw active service at Williamsburg, Seven Pines, Gaines Mills, and Boonsborough. At the latter place he had his first opportunity to distinguish himself. He led his company against a hot fire and after the commanding officer was wounded led the regiment and succeeded in effecting his objective. A scene described in this battle relates the horrors of war. Edgecombe company lost the greatest number killed in any one battle. A shell struck a sergeant of the company in the breast and exploded, leaving no trace of the body. Another was struck on the top of his head and uncapped, leaving the brains exposed.

The lieutenant-colonel commanding, in giving his account of the battle, says: "I noticed particularly the gallant bearing of Captain J. H. Hyman acting as major, and owing to an accident I was not able to command the regiment on the 17th, I therefore have the honor to call your attention to the accompanying report from Captain Hyman, who commanded that day."

A few days after this battle the reports of operation designated Hyman as major, commission dating March 2, 1862. In less than six months from the time his efficiency as a soldier had warranted promotion again, and on October 16, 1862, he became lieutenant-colonel. He was still in General Pender's brigade, and saw service with him in the serious battles of Northern Virginia. Hyman was afterwards promoted to colonel of his regiment.

He was very popular with the men and always considerate of them. An instance occurred in which several of his men got too much brandy while very cold and created considerable disturbance with an Irish battalion. Lieutenant-Colonel Benton Withers, who was in command of them, marched them back to camp. A letter written about him bears mark of his good feelings and kindness. A captain of one of his companies records: "The next day being Christmas Eve, Colonel Joe Hyman received a very nice box from a friend at Tarboro, North Carolina, and in the box were five gallons of North Carolina brandy, turkey, hams, sausage, cakes, etc. Well, he was something of a 'turnip' himself; he invited every commissioned officer to come up to his tent and partake of his hospitality. After a few smiles at the demijohn he then sent for the brass band, treated them and made them play till midnight. About this time his heart had gotten soft. He



called Colonel Withers and ordered him to go and tell all the officers that were tipsy to come to him at once, also to tell every man in the guardhouse that he was pardoned. He wound up by saying, 'D—n a man that will punish others for the very thing he will do himself.'"

At Chancellorsville he conducted himself well, and received the following commendation from General Pender: "Colonel Hyman showed himself a true and gallant officer." The eventful day at Appomattox still found Hyman in his fearless attitude.

Company G had various changes made in its personnel and organization. A list of officers all of Edgecombe County with dates of commission and changes are here given: J. H. Hyman, captain; J. A. Fugua, first lieutenant, and promoted to captain, October 15, 1862; G. L. Brown, sergeant, later second lieutenant, and finally promoted captain, 1864; C. M. Ciralia, second lieutenant, promoted to first lieutenant, October 15, 1862; G. M. Stancil, sergeant, promoted to first lieutenant; W. T. McNair, second lieutenant, and resigned October 15, 1861; B. P. Jenkins, sergeant, and promoted to second lieutenant, October 15, 1861; Rufus Atkinson, corporal and promoted to second lieutenant, April, 1862. Lieutenant Atkinson was wounded at Gettysburg and died, August 3, 1863. Lieutenants Brown and Stancil were wounded, but not fatally, at Williamsburg and at Chancellorsville. The company was made up almost exclusively of Edgecombe boys and endured some of the greatest trials of the war. It contributed approximately eighty-two privates out of a company of 104.

Companies I and K of the Fifteenth Regiment are also closely allied with Company G of the Fourteenth. In this famous regiment the beloved Dowd was at first adjutant and later colonel. Gray Willis Hammond became major February 27, 1863, and later in 1864 was promoted to lieutenant-colonel. These men deserve a few remarks of their deeds of valor. The regiment was organized at Garysburg, North Carolina, June 10, 1861. When McKinney, the colonel of the Fifteenth, was killed at Lee's Farm, H. A. Dowd, first lieutenant of Company I, and acting adjutant, was elected colonel April 20, 1862. He was wounded at Malvern Hill July 1, 1862, and resigned February 27, 1863. A rise in ranks occurred and G. W. Hammonds was accordingly elected

major. MacRae, who was appointed colonel at the resignation of Colonel Dowd, was appointed brigadier general August, 1864, and this gave Hammond the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

The organization of Company I from May, 1861, to 1864, was composed of Turner W. Battle, captain; Henry A. Dowd, first lieutenant; Benjamin T. Hart, first lieutenant; Frederick Philips, second lieutenant; Redding S. Suggs, second lieutenant; Solomon M. Pender, second lieutenant; Edwin E. Knight, second lieutenant, and D. H. Barlow, second lieutenant. E. D. Foxhall was first sergeant and was promoted to captain May 2, 1862. Thomas W. Davis, sergeant, was also promoted to second lieutenant in the Eighth Regiment March 25, 1863. The company had 148 enlisted men, most of whom were from Edgecombe.

Company K had three captains during its organization—Gray W. Hammonds, George W. White, and James P. Cross. First lieutenants were W. T. Gray, G. W. White, and J. P. Cross. Second lieutenants, J. J. Reed, Thomas H. Griffin, G. W. White, J. P. Cross, William D. Braswell, and H. H. Griffin. This company had 140 enlisted men, the majority being from Edgecombe.

These companies went through the battles of Lee's Farm, Malvern Hill, South Mountain, Sharpsburg, and Fredericksburg. It gave the promotion of J. P. Cross, a corporal, April 24, 1861, to the captaincy of Company K, March 14, 1863.

Company I was formed April 21, 1861, with John S. Dancy, captain; A. M. J. Whitehead, first lieutenant; William H. Powell and Pleasant Petway, second lieutenants; Thomas F. Cherry, Henry G. Gorham, James M. Cutchin, David S. Williams, William McDowell, sergeants, in order named, and James P. Jenkins, John A. Cutchin, Jesse H. B. Thorn, and C. R. King, corporals. J. G. Arrington was assistant surgeon. With the exception of William H. Philips, of Virginia, the 180 men, officers and privates, were from Edgecombe County.

May 16, 1862, Captain Dancy being detailed as quartermaster of the regiment, A. M. J. Whitehead was put in command. Powell was made first lieutenant, and in December was promoted captain. The entire company, along with the regiment, was captured during the bombardment of Fort Bartow. After being exchanged it had a reorganization at Camp Mangum and performed picket duty at Newbern, Washington, and Plymouth. The com-

pany saw service at Newport, battles of the Wilderness, and Spottsylvania. It suffered the hardships of the siege of Petersburg and rejoiced over the fight at Bentonville. It was in North Carolina at Goldsboro when 115,000 Federal troops were menacing three sides of the city, met and repulsed a force over three times its number. The regiment surrendered to General Sherman in Randolph County, North Carolina, after a brave struggle.

Company F of the Thirtieth Regiment was organized in Edgecombe County the latter part of September, 1861, and was mustered into the regiment at Camp Mangum, October 7, 1861. Its first captain was Franklin G. Pitt and was succeeded by William M. B. Moore, who was promoted from first lieutenant. George K. Harrell was also first lieutenant, commissioned May 10, 1862; wounded at Sharpsburg September 17, 1862, and received a promotion immediately afterwards. Charles Vines and James Pitt were the original second lieutenants, both commissioned August 21, 1861. Pitt died in August, 1862, and Lorenzo D. Eagles, being at first a sergeant, was promoted to second lieutenant March 10, 1862, and wounded June 27, 1862, at the battle of Gaines Mill. S. R. Moore, also a sergeant, was promoted second lieutenant January 20, 1863, and became company commander in the last days of the war. The noncommissioned officers were John R. Cobb, second sergeant; L. D. Eagles, third sergeant, wounded at Cold Harbor and promoted to second lieutenant January 20, 1863; J. B. Cobb, fourth sergeant; L. H. Smith, fifth sergeant, and Spencer Sherry, T. J. Moore, James Carney, L. R. Willis, corporals. There were 140 enlisted men and with the few exceptions of about fifteen men from Wake, Greene, and Pitt counties all were Edgecombe troops.

The troops were drilled at Fort Johnson and Camp Wyatt, near Fort Fisher. Winter quarters were made at Camp Wyatt until the army at Wilmington was reinforced by the regiment in early spring. The company was with the regiment in the attack against Burnside's cavalry, and the defense of Newbern. The battle of Seven Pines gave the troops the season of war. The regiment fought at Gaines Mill where Frederick Philips, of Edge-

combe, was appointed adjutant and commissioned July 5, 1862. Dr. F. M. Garrett, also of Edgecombe, was commissioned surgeon on August 20, 1862, in place of Surgeon Henry Joyner, who had resigned.

The troops were then moved to Sharpsburg September, 1862, where a terrible slaughter met the Edgecombe company. It was here also that Lieutenant Philips received a severe wound. The fire was very fierce and the report came that General Anderson was wounded and had left his command. Courier Baggarly, from brigade headquarters, was unable to find Colonel Tew, of the Second North Carolina, who was senior colonel of the regiment. The report was made to Colonel F. M. Parker, who instructed his adjutant, Lieutenant Philips, "to proceed cautiously down the line, observe what was going on, and if possible to find Colonel Tew and carry him Baggarly's report." In attempting this dangerous task Lieutenant Philips received several shots through his clothing, and succeeded in reaching hailing distance of Colonel Tew. He reported his message and in order to be certain his message was understood, asked Colonel Tew, who at the time was standing, to give him a sign that he had heard completely. Colonel Tew lifted his hat and gave a polite bow, and fell instantly with a bullet in his head. On his return Lieutenant Philips also received a severe wound on the head, which occasioned his leaving the field. Colonel Parker, perceiving the situation, attempted to reach the left of the brigade to rally the troops, and after going about ten steps he also received a minnie ball on the head and was carried from the field.

The next encounter with the Federal troops was at Chancellorsville. Here again the strength of the North Carolina troops was felt. This regiment also constituted the rear guard of Rhodes's Division at Gettysburg and drove the enemy from behind a stone wall into town. Immediately after this Adjutant Philips received a bad wound at Kelly's Ford, and in November, 1863, was appointed captain and assigned to duty in the spring of 1864. He bore the reputation of being an efficient assistant quartermaster.

In 1864 the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and the campaign of the Shenandoah Valley were taken part in by the



Edgewcombe troops. General Lee commended the North Carolina troops the last days at Appomattox. With him they laid down their arms.

Company F of the Thirty-first Regiment was organized sometime in August, 1861. The company was mustered into the Thirty-first Regiment September 19th, with Charles W. Knight, another one of Edgewcombe's courageous men, as captain. He reached the rank of lieutenant-colonel in June, 1863, but resigned shortly after.

Although Company F was about as much or perhaps more of a Martin County contingent, it is related to Edgewcombe history because of its first captain.

Company B of the Thirty-third Regiment, with few exceptions, was also made up of Edgewcombe soldiers. It preceded Company F of the Thirty-first Regiment in date of organization and was the company which distinguished itself in common with this memorable regiment. Frederick H. Jenkins was the first captain, being commissioned in July, 1861. He died in June, 1862, and was succeeded by Theophilus C. Hyman, who was at the time first lieutenant. He resigned September 1, 1862, and Richard H. Gatlin, promoted to first lieutenant June 7th, was appointed captain. Thomas H. Gatlin, who was second lieutenant in Lloyd's Battalion, was promoted to first lieutenant to fill the personnel of the company. Richard H. Gatlin in the meantime having been assigned to special duty on November 18, 1862, T. H. Gatlin acted as captain in his stead for sometime. Ebenezer Price, of Martin County, also acted as captain at times, and remained with the company, being wounded at Cedar Mountain, Falling Waters, and Wilcox's Farm, until he resigned February 14, 1865. Harrison P. Lyon was transferred from Company A, Tenth Regiment, with the commission of first lieutenant. Francis D. Foxhall was second lieutenant and died in June, 1862, after serving the company for less than a year. Additional commissioned officers who served the company during its organization were Peyton T. Anthony, second lieutenant, of Halifax, transferred from Tenth Virginia Cavalry, and Lewis H. Lawrence, second lieutenant, commissioned October, 1864. Levi H. Pervis, Bervin Stephenson, James H. Jenkins, Weldon S. Hunt, W. Bevely were the first ser-



geants, while Thomas L. May, William C. Davenport, William F. Horde, John Andrews, William H. Andrews, and John Bowers were corporals.

This company was in for the war and not a twelve-months volunteer. It trained at the fair grounds in Raleigh, and then transferred to Camp Mangum and united with the Thirty-third Regiment. Companies B and F were assigned to special duty in Hyde County and later with two companies were placed under Major E. D. Hall, of the Seventh Regiment. They left from Hyde County in 1862, and rejoined the Thirty-third at the fair grounds in Newbern. Here the men got a taste of real gun fire when the engagement with General Burnside took place. Company B lost three of its men, John Bryan, Riley Bullock, and Wiley Whitley, killed in this battle.

The troops in this contingent went to Virginia, May, 1862, with the Second Brigade, known as "Branch Brigade," and after General Branch's death, the "Lane Brigade." Here the brigade was marched to and fro between the foothills and Criglersville in order to deceive the enemy. Later service was given at the Chickahominy, Gaines Mills, Cold Harbor, Fraser's Farm, Mechanicsville, Fredericksburg, and Malvern Hill. At Fredericksburg, as at numerous other places, Captain Gatlin had charge of the picket line. Under a staggering and murderous fire the picket line, led by him in this engagement, retired slowly and in perfect order. Captain Gatlin was complimented for the bravery and coolness which he demonstrated. Some of the roughest fighting was experienced at Malvern Hill, where a chance came to annihilate McClellan's army. If the Confederate forces could have succeeded, history would no doubt be different than it is now recorded.

Cedar Run, Manassas, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, where the lost dispatch played havoc with Lee's army, all claim their toll of manhood and gallant deeds. At Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862, with Pender and others the troops from Edgecombe performed praiseworthy service. Captain Saunders, in his official report as commander of the regiment, gives favorable mention of Lieutenant Price, of Company B. The majority of the enlisted men were conscripts, and the report says they fought heroically with the veterans. After fighting at Gettysburg, retreating to

Virginia, attacking at Mire Run and capturing three flags at Spottsylvania, the force crossed Appomattox at Goode's bridge and occupied a position near the court house. The following officers, according to Major Weston, who took command after Colonel Cowan refused to surrender the regiment, that were present at Appomattox were Jenkins, Gatlin, Hyman, Price, Lyon, and Lawrence. Company B had the reputation of being the best drilled company in the regiment. It distinguished itself in almost all engagements and at the surrender at Appomattox the company stacked only seventeen guns, with three men present without arms. No company merited greater honor, nor any captain of a company greater beloved than Captain Gatlin. Major Weston accords him the honor of having been the most humane to his men and more democratic than any company commander of the Thirty-third Regiment.

At the fair grounds of Newbern August 2, 1861, the counties of Edgecombe, Greene, and Wilson, Edgecombe having sent more men than the other two counties, sent troops to organize Company F of the Fortieth Regiment. Those who served as captains were Joseph J. Lawrence, Edgecombe; Richard H. Blount, Martin, and John C. Robertson supposedly from Martin. Serving as lieutenants in the war were Richard C. Tillery and Berry Lancaster, while the second lieutenants were Walter Dunn, B. Lancaster, R. H. Blount, J. C. Robertson, J. L. Pool, H. Williams, and F. Edwards. Out of eleven noncommissioned officers Edgecombe gave five to the company during the war.

After organization and drill the company remained at Fort Macon, North Carolina, until the late fall. From November 1, 1861, to March, 1862, it did picket duty on Harber's Island. It returned to Fort Macon in time to take part in the bombardment of this fort and to be captured April 26, 1862. It lost two members before its capture. The company was soon paroled and landed at Fort Fisher from the gunboat "Chippewa." The troops returned home and remained there until September 4, 1862, when an exchange took place and a reorganization effected at Goldsboro. From here the company went to Kinston and fought there December 14th, also at White Hall and Goldsboro. It was also active in the Pickett and Hoke campaigns in the winter and spring of 1863, fighting at Washington, North Carolina, and Deep

Gully until in the early spring of 1864. It then went to Fort Caswell and later to Fort Campbell, where the company remained until Fort Fisher was captured. The company left Fort Campbell and joined the regiment for the first time at Fort Anderson.

As a unit of the Fortieth Regiment the company served at Wilmington. In January, 1865, the companies were separated again, and Company F occupied Fort Campbell on Oak Island. After the assault against and fall of Fort Fisher the company was transported by steamer to Smithville, and later joined Company A on the march to Fort Caswell. Here the company engaged in several minor skirmishes and joined the retreat across the State to join Lee's army. The junction was never formed, and they surrendered with General Joseph E. Johnson near Greensboro, North Carolina.

Among the companies Company E of the Forty-third Regiment was the most historic. It was in the spring of 1862 before this company was organized. Those who served as captains were John A. Vines, James R. Thigpen, and Wiley J. Cobb. The first lieutenants were John A. Vines, James R. Thigpen, and Wiley J. Cobb, all being promoted to captains and resigned in order, except Cobb. Second lieutenants were Van B. Sharpe, J. H. Leigh, Charles Vines, Willis R. Dupre, T. H. Williams, and W. H. Wilkerson. With the exception of T. H. Williams and two privates from Pitt County the company of ninety-six enlisted men were from Edgecombe.

The company trained at Camp Mangum and was mustered with the Forty-third Regiment. It went through the fights at Wilmington, Kinston, Drewry's Bluff, and Fredericksburg. It was in the march through Pennsylvania, and fought at Brandy Station, Gettysburg, and followed Lewis at Seminary Ridge. Later it was in the battles of Mine Run, Plymouth, Washington, Spottsylvania Court House, and saw the dome of the Federal capitol from Fort Stevens. The pathetic scene of Appomattox was experienced by this company after having performed memorable work for the lost cause.

In the early part of January, 1862, Elisha Cromwell, who had been prominent in enlisting Edgecombe troops, organized Company B, which later joined the Forty-fourth Regiment. Cromwell was well over the draft age and gave his efforts from patriotic

motive. All of his help had been drafted, and being a large planter in the county was considerably handicapped in his work. Edmenson, his overseer, and who had been left to care for crops, had been drafted three times and each time Mrs. Cromwell was asked to allow him to go. Three times a man was put in his place, and three times Edmenson asked to go. Assisting Elisha Cromwell was Baked W. Mabrey, first lieutenant; Thomas M. Carter and R. C. Brown, second lieutenants. The company had 135 enlisted men, and were with few exceptions natives of the county.

When the company met at Camp Mangum March 28, 1862, a reorganization took place and Captain Cromwell, having had considerable experience, was elected major of the Forty-fourth Regiment. Baker W. Mabrey succeeded him as captain, and died early in September. Robert C. Brown then became captain in his stead. Thomas M. Carter, who was second lieutenant, was promoted to first lieutenant after R. C. Brown, the original second lieutenant, was advanced by promotion. Charles D. Mabrey automatically became second lieutenant, being promoted from first sergeant March 28, 1862. As did Elisha E. Knight, who also succeeded to the position of second lieutenant.

Immediately after the reorganization the troops camped in Tarboro, and later went to Greenville for a few weeks, doing picket duty. From Greenville the regiment proceeded to Virginia and was assigned to Pettigrew's Brigade. In the meantime the death of Colonel Singletary and the resignation of Lieutenant-Colonel Cotton, placed Major Cromwell to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Before the ensuing campaign in Virginia had advanced to any considerable extent Colonel Cromwell resigned and returned to the county.

This company gave its valiant men to the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania Court House, Petersburg, Gaines Mill, Reen's Station and left a trail of blood along its exhausted march to Appomattox, where in common with the other troops surrendered to the Federal army.

Company E of the Seventy-fifth Regiment was originally one of the three companies of the Sixty-second Georgia Regiment, and later was incorporated in the Sixteenth Battalion North Carolina Calvary. Later it emerged into the North Carolina Cavalry or the Seventy-fifth North Carolina Regiment. The



official orders of the change were ignored in the rush of organization, and the regiment officially retained the designation of the Sixteenth Battalion. The company was organized in June, 1862, with F. G. Pitt captain, promoted to major when the change occurred to the Seventy-fifth Regiment. When Colonel Kennedy was wounded, Lieutenant-Colonel Edelin was promoted to colonel in command until March, 1865, at which time Major Pitt took command.

J. B. Edgerton became captain after the promotion of Pitt. V. B. Sharpe was first lieutenant at the company's first organization, B. P. Jenkins, second lieutenant, was taken prisoner July 20, 1863, and Mark P. Pitt succeeded to the second lieutenancy. J. S. Pippins, I. T. Cherry, P. S. Sugg, William Peebles, and L. W. Deavans were sergeants, and R. A. Knight, D. V. Bullock, W. E. Green, and J. B. Skinner, of Wilson County, were corporals. All except six members were from Edgecombe.

The regiment was broken up and this company performed duty with the Sixty-second Georgia in Eastern Carolina near Greenville, and Southeast Virginia. Captain Edgerton camped with his isolated company near Rocky Mount until a raid was made here.

During his stay in the vicinity Captain Edgerton and his company participated in the battle of Daniels School House, the only engagement of importance which took place on Edgecombe soil. On the morning of July 14, 1863, General Martin sent orders for Major Kennedy, commanding the Seventy-fifth Regiment, to report immediately to him near Hamilton. Every available man was hurriedly collected and upon arrival at Hamilton Colonel Martin was found sick, with Lieutenant-Colonel Lamb in command. Colonel Lamb gave orders for the troops to return to Tarboro, where the enemy was to be expected on his return from Rocky Mount. The advance guards were to hold the enemy in check until the regiment with artillery could be brought up.

The orders were obeyed until the troops reached Daniels School House, about five miles from town. Captain Edgerton was sent forward with five men to find the way. He encountered the enemy near the creek bridge, and their attention was drawn to him and his men by the firing of a gun by one of his men, contrary to orders. The Federal troops mounted their horses and



started after him. Captain Edgerton reported that the whole force had crossed the bridge and were cautiously making their way two miles from the regiment. He received instructions to go back and give fight, and in this manner draw them back to the regiment, which had concealed itself in a well-timbered road between the school house and a field. A triangle was formed of the concealed men, who waited for Captain Edgerton to report.

Upon Edgerton's appearance, he cautioned the men to hold their fire until ordered, and then not to aim at any one above the stirrups. Edgerton and Major Kennedy, with five of his troops, took their stand in the road. The whole number engaged is given by Major Kennedy as being thirty-four men with Captain Edgerton; Captain Ellis, twenty-eight; Captain Thompson, nineteen. The relative position was: Captain Edgerton on the south side of the road, and Major Kennedy on the north side. This was the ambush which succeeded.

The enemy came in view at the corner of a fence and opened on them with a small cannon, thinking all the time it was a small party that they had encountered around Tarboro. They prepared for a charge, and in doing so received a fire from the right and left, losing seventeen horses in one volley. In delivering the fire it was believed the enemy would be cut off from escape, but many who were dismounted by the fire ran off, and since the Confederate horses were concealed two hundred yards away they could not be pursued. The men were still unobserved in the woods, and those who remained of the enemy refused to surrender. Their column was cut in half, with the rear retreating back to Tarboro, while the troops in front fought on with their sabers after their pistols had been emptied.

Captain Edgerton and Major Kennedy and a few mounted men had considerable excitement. Edgerton attacked the Federal Major Clarkson and felled him with his saber in the road. Major Kennedy having shot his pistol empty resorted to the butt of his carbine, and gave Captain Church, of the Federal side, a staggering blow and knocked him from his horse.

Those of the Confederates who were mounted immediately gave chase to the retreating Federals. The race was run to Tarboro bridge in hope of cutting off the enemy, but when the Confederates arrived the bridge was torn up on the end opposite the

town, while the other end was on fire. The troops went as far as they could and called for aid from the citizens, who gave ready assistance. H. T. Clark, who then was Governor, being in town, passed the first bucket to extinguish the blaze.

The enemy lost seventeen horses killed, forty-five captured, five prisoners at the school house and ten prisoners in the chase, who were sent to Colonel Lamb. Also the capture of Captain Church and Major Clarkton, Federal officers, and sixty-two saddles with equipment were the results of the battle of Daniel's School House.

Again at Newbern in 1865 Captain Edgerton won commendations for himself and company's fighting qualities. The army then returned to Virginia and camped around Petersburg. The regiment surrendered soon after this at Appomattox after distinguishing itself at Petersburg, Plymouth, Broadway, Brigen Mill, Davis House, Peeble's Farm, Hatcher's Run, Newport, Tarboro, or Daniel's School House, Evan's Mills and Blount's Creek. Major Pitt had bravely led the command until April 2, 1865, when he was worn to exhaustion and was reported as captured in the numerous battles in the retreat to Appomattox.

With the exception of a few individuals scattered among the numerous companies of the North Carolina troops, the account of Edgecombe troops is concluded. Among the individuals who served in other companies were Andrew M. Thigpen, second lieutenant, Company C, Forty-fourth Regiment; R. Hicks, Isaiah Thomas, and Richard Thomas, of the Confederate States Navy. Edgecombe also had official representation in the Southern Navy in the person of Richard Battle, master, who commanded in 1863. In addition also to the services of Dr. Baker at Bethel, Edgecombe gave two assistant surgeons—H. C. Herdon and W. T. Harlee—to the Confederate cause. Mention should also be made of the deeds of courage rendered by O. C. Petway. When the Thirty-fifth Regiment was organized, November 8, 1861, at Camp Crabtree, near Raleigh, he was made major of the regiment and was rated as third ranking officer. After the fall of Newbern, March 11, 1862, the regiment retreated to Kinston and was placed in General Ransom's Brigade. Lieutenant-Colonel M. D. Craton resigned about April 10, 1862, and Major Petway succeeded him as lieutenant-colonel. Colonel Petway fought at the battle of Seven Pines, and in the bloody battle of Malvern

Hill. He led a heavy charge upon the enemy ranks, sustaining a severe loss in officers and men. Colonel Ramson received a fatal wound and Lieutenant-Colonel Petway was killed. He was a gallant officer and was scheduled for a promotion at the time of his death.

Major Henry A. Dowd also deserves commendation for his heroic achievements. He received rapid promotion in active military service, having been first lieutenant of one of the companies formed from the division of Captain Bridgers's Edgecombe Guards at the beginning of the war. He received a wound which caused his retirement in 1863. He was appointed quartermaster general and was on the Governor's staff in 1864 and 1865.

William Henry Austin, born 1840, lost his life in the war, and is entitled to honorable record. He had always been in poor health, having left the University of North Carolina in 1858, due to illness. He enlisted June 1, 1862, in Company I of the Seventeenth Regiment. He was promoted to sergeant, but in 1862 was given a furlough home to recruit, because of ill health. In the early spring of the year of 1865 he was given his final discharge and died at Rolesville, March, 1865, while on his way home.

W. T. Parker, captain Company A, October 2, 1862, to December 1, 1863, of the Thirty-third Regiment, and George W. Sanderlin, captain from August 1, 1863, to close of war of same company contributed gallant and heroic service in the battles fought by the famous Thirty-third Regiment.

In the meantime H. T. Clark, speaker of the Senate, of Edgecombe County, succeeded Governor Ellis, who died in July, 1861. Ellis's unexpired term dated from July 8, 1860, to September 7, 1862, inclusive. Governor Clark was a distinguished gentleman. He was a graduate of Chapel Hill, 1826, at the early age of seventeen years. He remained inactive in politics until the death of Louis D. Wilson. The first instance of his gentility and kindness came after Governor Ellis's death. His letter addressed to Mrs. Ellis will compare with the expression of any man. In a letter dated July 10, 1861, three days after Ellis's death, he wrote to Graham Daves:

"I will thank you to convey to Mrs. Ellis, in the kindest terms, my deep sympathy with the great affliction which has fallen upon

her in the death of Governor Ellis and how gratifying it would be to me to offer a word or an act which would alleviate her distress.

"I desire to tender to her the continued use of the Executive Mansion. It would gratify me, if it would prove agreeable to her to do so. Assuring her that it would not in the least interfere with any personal arrangements, I shall have made for my own residence in Raleigh."

Before the beginning of hostilities in 1861, Governor Clark, as the speaker of the Senate, made an address which was an indication of the policy he would pursue if the authority were ever placed in his hands. In 1860 he made a conservative and logical address, pointing out the seriousness of the political situation, and the necessity of caution and honesty in interpreting the will of the people.

No man of the State has placed upon him a greater responsibility in carrying out the will of the people. He came into power when the State was just beginning to throw its weight into the southern cause. Military organization was more or less dependent upon him as commander-in-chief of the State forces. Yet he more than succeeded. Governor Clark did more for the morale and good of the State troops than has been realized and appreciated. To him much of the credit is due for the efficiency and admirable discipline with which they fought in the war. The regiments were better officered, more proficient in organization than from any other State. Northern writers generally concede this point. It was truly a trying task when men and means was the call from every section, and most commendably did Governor Clark rise to the occasion. It was his honored duty to assign commissioned officers to fifty State regiments, and then to supply and equip them upon the field of action.

Governor Clark was fifty-three years of age when called to the high position, and in the most seasoned period of his life for the arduous duties he had to perform. One of the first acts of his official career as Governor was to divide the State into districts according to counties. Each sheriff was designated as an officer, whose duties were to collect blankets, woolen socks, garments, and



all the useful articles and send them to Raleigh with a list of the donors. In this manner needed supplies for the troops were collected and properly disbursed where most needed.

At no time did the cause for promptness and business acumen become more prominent than when the convention of 1861 decreed to issue a currency for the State. There were grave dangers of a fluctuation of paper money, and its abundance was likely to cause inflation, thereby causing the good intentions of the State authorities to come to naught. The ability of H. T. Clark nowhere showed more conspicuously than in the part he took in this problem. Nowhere does his idea of sound government and clean citizenship cast a more noble luster than in the sedition acts of 1861, the test oaths, and the movement against religious exemption from the war. The partisan spirit was always held in check by him, even in the face of the aspersions and invectives of his enemies. This attitude prevailed even toward the convention which sought to remove him by declaring the office of the Governor vacant. The movement of course was instigated by Holden, who was reported to have wanted the office, but whose plans met with failure.

Governor Clark had the hearty support of J. H. Powell, member from Edgecombe in 1862, 1863, 1864, and 1865. David Cobb and L. D. Farmer served the county in the House of Commons in 1864 and 1865.

Many of these issues are State history, and a repetition of a story repeatedly told. The historians who write North Carolina history are indebted to him for the preservation of our State records. To him more than any one else does this noble task and effort belong. The writer has in his possession a letter written by Governor Clark showing the arduous task and duty performed not only to the citizens of his State, but to the entire literary and historically inclined everywhere. His brief administration is one that reflects an honor upon the pages of North Carolina history.

The people of the county, in addition to contributing their services, sacrificing their personal comforts, and their lives in many instances, gave material aid in numerous ways. No group of people ever had a cause dearer, no people committed themselves more unselfishly. When the approach of the Union forces were daily rumored, and even when they came on frequent occa-



sions, the people conducted themselves with a cool, sober courage. There were no wild demonstrations betrayed, but a sensible patriotic view of their responsibilities and duty in the crisis. The citizens of Tarboro met March the 20th, 1862, and gave vent to their opinions and expectations at the approach of the enemy. From the *Tarboro Southerner* one can read:

“WHEREAS, The military authorities in this department of North Carolina have issued an order that all cotton, naval stores, and tobacco shall be removed west of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad by the 25th instant, or be liable to be destroyed to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy, be it therefore resolved as the sense of this meeting—<sup>1</sup>

“First. That in our judgment all of the articles above named should be promptly destroyed by fire or otherwise, whenever in danger of falling into the enemy’s hands, and that a committee of three in each captain’s district <sup>2</sup> be appointed by the chair to see to the enforcement of this resolution.

“Second. Believing it impossible to remove the cotton west of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad by the time specified, we respectfully request the military authorities to extend the time to April 15th, and to carry out this resolution we ask the appointment of a committee by the chair to attend to this matter.

“Third. That as the earnest sense of this meeting in this hour of peril to the very life of our young Republic, we believe the cultivation of cotton the present year will make inroads from the enemy and render the staff of life, bread, scarce, and we invoke the farmers of Edgecombe not to cultivate in cotton a larger area than will make one acre to the land.

“Fourth. That we regard ardent spirits at this time as a worse enemy than the Yankees, and respectfully request a meeting of the justices of this county to consider the propriety of ordering the sheriff to seize every drop of spirits of any kind offered for sale, with the understanding that a fair valuation shall be paid the owner of the same, and that should any one offend a second time, then the sheriff shall seize the spirits and pour it on the ground, without compensation.

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<sup>1</sup> Held in Tarboro March 20, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> The county was divided into districts for conscription purposes, and also to collect supplies, as well as other military necessities.

"Fifth. That we recommend to our citizens to remain at home and pursue their usual avocations, should the fortune of war place us temporarily under the enemy's control."

The people gave and gave of their limited means until they themselves suffered want. Numerous quantities of supplies had been sent from the county to General Johnson's and General Lee's army. Yankee raiding parties paid several visits also and destroyed what was not taken. Horses from numerous farms that could not be hid were seized and carried away, leaving the women and children helpless to cultivate their land in the absence of husband and father. Salt, the most common as well as the most useful article, by 1863, became a luxury. Indeed efforts were frequently futile in the attempt to obtain this article. The freight cost five times as much as the salt is worth today to get it from Wilmington. John Norfleet, in the Confederate commissary, in 1863 ordered sixty-nine bags from Wilmington, with the freight costing him \$147.45. J. Potts ordered twenty bags, the freight being \$20.00, or one dollar per bag. B. J. Keech ordered ten bags, with the freight amounting to \$10.00.

The county also by having an industry of considerable importance—cotton mills at Rocky Mount—became one of the principle sources for cotton goods for manufacturing cloth and surgical supplies. This factory became an object of the Federal forces purpose, and while manufacturing cotton goods for the Confederate army, was burned. The Federal account of this destruction was reported by the commanding officer, who states that in the expedition to Rocky Mount a large cotton mill, a bridge and a large amount of property was destroyed. A Mr. Bagley, of Williamston, then a refugee from that town, in Rocky Mount, gives an awful account of conditions in Edgecombe. These conditions were later reported to the Governor of the State, who sent troops to alleviate conditions. The occasion for these troops resulted in numerous skirmishes in the county. The conditions had reached such proportions that T. W. Moore wrote to General J. R. Stubbs, of Halifax, in December, 1864, that the Yankees, with eight gunboats and fifteen hundred troops, were landing at Williamstown and advancing toward Tarboro. General Leventhrope was accordingly dispatched to check them. The Federal troops, however, reached the county and took or destroyed considerable

property. General Stubbs lost all his property at the Perry place, including negroes, horses, mules, hogs, while all outhouses and barns were burned to the ground.

Sherman, on his march to the sea, passed through the northern edge of the county. His cavalry followed the railroad to Fayetteville, North Carolina, and then came east to Rocky Mount. Sherman reached Rocky Mount in person the 22d of February, and crossed the river on a pontoon bridge February 23d. He gives an account of having his army divided due to the fact of high water washing away his bridge, leaving General Parker on one side of the river with his division and himself on the other.

In spite of all the adversity which afflicted the people, it would be folly to attempt to describe the suffering. Hope was always entertained and assistance rendered. When General Hill issued his request to the county for hands to build his defenses at Washington, Edgecombe responded and sent eighty-eight good hands, thirty-three more than her quota, and those asked for, on a flat boat down the Tar River. In addition, the county in 1862 raised money and purchased 1,000 pair of stout shoes for her volunteers. In 1862 the county also gave the State in taxes \$21,689.12,<sup>1</sup> which was more than the average for the preceding years.

This chapter could not be closed without mention of the women of the county. May their memory be ever cherished, as the source of inspiration and strength of all good and patriotic movements. To them who bore the brunt of war and the curse of reconstruction during the frightful days of 1861 to 1870 honor is hereby accorded. And when the time came Edgecombe's noble women did all that could be done to perpetuate the deeds of their sons, husbands, and fathers. Mention is made of the organization of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. In this society to perpetuate the valor and heroism of the sons of the War between the states, Mrs. T. W. Thrash has had a most active part. Preceding and contemporaneous with her were the spirited women of the county. The movement began in 1870 by the women of the city of Wilmington to promote an organization of associated Confederates in every county in the State. Its purpose was to decorate

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<sup>1</sup> The natural result would have been a decline, since over 1,400 men were absent from the county in service, thus decreasing the amount paid in taxes as well as causing a decrease in production.

graves, offer solace to widows and orphans of the Confederate dead, to assist the maimed, blind and cripples who were disabled in the Confederate service. This act has been continued by the ladies in the county through their local organization. A drinking fountain, at an approximate cost of \$500.00, has been erected as a Confederate memorial in the city common at Tarboro. The county of Edgecombe contributed the most money for the erection of the Wyatt monument at Raleigh, June 10, 1913, when the fiftieth anniversary was celebrated by the unveiling, with one of Wyatt's great-nephews participating.

The Dixie Lee Chapter, an auxiliary of the U. D. C., is another organization created to keep alive the memory of the deeds of the Confederate dead. This society has contributed liberally in funds and deeds to all worthy and deserving objects. These organizations took an active part in forming the Henry Wyatt Chapter of Selma, formed in 1915, and the William Dorsey Pender Chapter, Tarboro, established about fifteen years ago.

After many suggestions from the *Tarboro Southerner* and the "Progressive Association of Tarboro," a beautiful monument was erected in the Tarboro common. Mention is made of the noble efforts of the citizens of the county, and especially the efforts of Mrs. H. L. Staton, Mrs. Anna S. Howard, chairman of the committee; Mrs. Mattie Philips, Mrs. John L. Bridgers, Miss Sallie B. Staton, Mrs. Maggie W. Speight, Miss Bettie C. Whitehead, Mrs. Sadie F. Killelnew, Miss Lucy C. Staton, Mrs. Pattie D. Hart, General W. R. Cox, Captain R. H. Gatlin, Captain W. H. Powell, Gray Brown, Captain Owen Williams, Captain E. D. Foxhall, Lieutenant William Howard, Sergeant J. H. Baker, and Sergeant J. M. Johnson, and Frank Powell.



## CHAPTER VII

### RECONSTRUCTION—SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL

No more appropriate name could be given for the events which transpired between 1865 and 1880 than that of reconstruction. Politics were more or less corrupt, dominated to a large extent by the Federal Government; education made no progress, agriculture was neglected; labor was at a premium; commerce and trade stood still; the economic and financial conditions were uncertain; and the racial problem was alarming. The cause for such a tragic state was the Civil War and the adjustment which followed. It is quite impossible for the later generations to realize the untold hardships and suffering the citizens endured during this eventful period.

At the conclusion of the war questions of readjustment were the center of attention and the prevailing issue. Out of them grew numerous problems which had to be given due consideration. The State was under territorial government by the United States; and the Federal authority required, under heavy penalty, that the equality of rights and privileges be secured to all citizens, without distinction of race, color, or previous social relation. It was also required that avowed loyalty to the Union be assured. The President of the United States assumed an autocratic position on the most profound issue in the history of the country. The leading Republicans warned him that this would result in the complete ascendancy of the Confederates. The Republican party, following the Federal lead, evinced in their legislation a determined purpose to keep the men who had been loyal to their country during the direful years of war from any participation in the management of their affairs and to give preference to negroes, scalawags, and carpet-baggers. The determination of the President to adhere to his policy, though apparently condemned by the masses of the party which had elected him, created a spirit of defiance among those who had been true to the Confederacy, for he, too, believed in disfranchisement.

The returning Confederate soldiers had a moral right to believe what their parole said, "Return to your homes and repair your wasted fortunes; build up the interests of your State, and you



shall not be molested." The Federal generals to some extent endeavored to have this promise observed; but the United States persistently ignored this policy.

Those who fought for the Confederate causes and survived, returned home to find Edgecombe County under martial law. General Martindale, of Washington, had his headquarters at Jamesville, Martin County. A provisional Governor, W. W. Holden, had been appointed, and a conservative representative from each county had been called to provide a form of government for the State.

Under the protection of the Federal Government undesirable men from the North became residents of the county in order to exploit the innocent and misguided blacks and the helpless whites. Politics offered the greatest advantage; consequently Edgecombe witnessed a quick transition from a Democratic regime to a Republican rule. The Democrats were deprived of the right to vote because of their participation in the War, and negroes being enfranchised naturally followed the political lead of their liberators.

One of the important political factors, as far as the Republican party was concerned, was the Freedman's Bureau. It was established by the Federal Government with the purpose of trying cases affecting freedmen, to clothe and feed the suffering, and assist the negro in securing employment. Colonel Savage was the first in charge in the county and proved a very considerate and just man. Captain R. H. Gatlin, of Tarboro, had Colonel Savage and his wife at his house frequently, and the people in the county were reported to be on good terms with him. His station was at Rocky Mount, and a branch agency was later established at Tarboro. Captain Fred De Silver succeeded him about 1868, but he was a man of different type from Colonel Savage. He caused Joshua Bullock, an overseer for Moses Mordecai, who owned the present Dunbar farm immediately after the War, to be put in jail in Raleigh for over a month for whipping a negro caught in the act of stealing bags.

A crew of northern missionaries followed the bureau to Edgecombe County, and a mission for the purpose of teaching the negro was located at the present home of Dr. S. N. Harrell, of

Tarboro, formerly owned by the Lawrence family. The women connected with the mission soon became dissatisfied because of ostracism, and the organization disbanded in 1868.

In 1872 the Freedman's Bureau was abolished by Congress, and after June 20th of that year, the business of Tarboro and the county was conducted through the Adjutant General of the Army. There were many claims for bounties and for damaged property and confiscated lands in Edgecombe, and Goldsboro was made the claim station for all eastern counties, and payments were made there.

Representatives of the Union League, which was organized in the North in 1862 as a political body of Unionists, came to Edgecombe about 1866. At this time efforts were made to establish this organization in every village. The first establishment was at Battleboro. Agents of the Freedman's Bureau had done considerable missionary work among the negroes and succeeded in causing their alienation from the native whites. A few negroes who were to be used for political purposes were initiated in the spring of 1866. The league offered a good substitute for the Freedman's Bureau, which was then on the verge of collapsing. Introduced by northern men of selfish design, it was carried on by them to work on the impulses and passions of the negro. By April, 1867, almost every negro who would be able to vote at the coming election was an ardent member of the league. Private information from old citizens of the county discloses the fact that the negro was under compulsion from the northern leaders to join the league. An initiation fee of five dollars was charged, and monthly dues of ten cents.

A few of the negroes in the county, like one Harvey Dancy and James Harris, declined to connect themselves with the league, preferring to accept guidance from their former masters. Dancy was candidate for employment by the State Legislature in 1870, and of pronounced conservative principles. This worked hardships on the dissenting negro, and under the direction of the carpet-baggers, who feared that the solidarity of the Republican party would be jeopardized, the Union League instituted punishment. In July, 1868, a negro in the county was severely beaten because of his refusal to join the league.

The first local president of the Union League was Major Tatton, who in 1866 was living in Battleboro. Tatton was a carpet-bagger and became famous for his underhand work and corrupt domination of the negro in the county. When he first came to Edgecombe he was employed by the Democratic party to assist in carrying the county Democratic. The idea was to do propaganda work among the negroes and to enlighten them on their new condition. Tatton, however, after collecting all the funds he could, left Tarboro and became connected with the league. He, on a certain occasion, had ordered a negro to be brought before the council of the league for refusing to join. The negro was brought and confined for one day and night, and experienced considerable fright at his hands. Tatton was tried by the court in Edgecombe County and sentenced to six months in prison. The case was presented to Governor Holden, the president of the league in North Carolina, and at his command the district commander ordered soldiers to break the jail at Tarboro and release Tatton. This was done and Tatton in turn released several negroes who were implicated with him.

Immediately following this, Tatton and a number of his followers became involved in another case. This time Wiley Taylor, a negro member of the league, had voted the Democratic ticket. Tatton and his followers had abused Taylor, and the courts sentenced Tatton and his followers to imprisonment the second time. The parties appeared to have had a fair trial, as certified by the Freedman's Bureau agent at Tarboro, who had been requested to be present at the trial. On Monday following conviction Lieutenant Heimer Beaman, agent at Rocky Mount, reached Tarboro with an order from General Canby for unconditional release of Tatton, Barnes, and Maner<sup>1</sup> from custody of civil authority, and declaring action of the court as null and void on grounds that the prosecution arose from prejudice on the part of civil authorities and with intention to break up the league. General Canby was evidently prompted in this move by Holden, who was exercising supervision of league operations.

Richmond Staton, a negro preacher, succeeded Tatton as head of the Union League in Edgecombe. He became as widely known as his predecessor for infamous deeds and terror. He had negroes

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<sup>1</sup> Barnes and Maner were associated with Tatton.

seized and severely beaten for voting the conservative ticket. On one occasion Staton was arrested by the sheriff of Edgecombe County, together with seven negroes under him. They were brought to Tarboro charged with assault. Finding himself in trouble Staton went to his former white friends to secure bail. He was refused and referred to his political friends as the proper ones to render assistance. He considered John Norfleet, a Republican of the county, as the one most benefited by his vote and influence, and requested his help in securing bail. Mr. Norfleet declined also, leaving Staton to reflect that politics is indeed passing strange.

It was under the reign of the Union League that Edgecombe witnessed what was known as the "Noo Administration of Justice." The word "Noo" was originated by the *Tarboro Southerner*, and indicated a satirical opinion on the new regime. Its original import was also closely connected with the idea advanced by northern politicians of the forty acres and a mule to be given to former negro slaves. The tone of this was later changed by negro leaders, who instructed the negroes in the county they would get forty acres and one hundred dollars in cash. It remained for James Harris and Sil Barnes, two negroes in the Democratic party, to dispel this false doctrine. The occasion for the ironic name was a letter written by L. L. Lancaster, when he was elected justice in 1868. The letter was addressed to W. F. Mercer, a leading citizen in the township in which Lancaster was elected justice. In his letter, written December 8, 1868, Lancaster wrote: "We claim one-half of the cotton and one-half of the corn by L. D. Bullock in year 1868, and we shall be to your house to get same December 6, 1868." The idea being that as a newly elected justice, Lancaster considered himself entitled to some remuneration and would employ his office to collect his due.

In order to promote the interests of the negro politically (so-called) and to corral them for elections, a new brick house was erected in Tarboro under radical guidance and financial support for the accommodation of guests "without regard for color." At this time all negro leaders were agitating social equality, and the situation was not without comment. H. M. Williams was installed as manager, and the ever observant *Southerner* in its editorial commended "all violators of the law to the tender mercies



of mine host, Mr. Williams," and assured them security under his control. Another incident served to fan the flames of social equality and in all probability gave regrets to one of our best religious bodies. A negro bishop came to Tarboro in 1867 and was given permission to preach in the white Methodist Church. This brought considerable criticism against local Methodism, and resulted in harm which was felt in after years.

There were only a few isolated cases, however, in which actual social equality was practiced. The *Tarboro Southerner*, in 1869, gave an account of a white man applying for license to marry a negress of Wilmington. The register refused, and the editorial comment referred to the act of the register, but stated that Edgecombe had stain indited upon its history. One infers from this that there had been a few cases that slipped through the register.

The dastard measures employed by the Union League proved disastrous in two ways; first, a desertion by honest negroes, and, second, the establishment of an organization to offset its force.<sup>1</sup> After the notorious occurrence of whipping deserting negroes and the arrogation to control by force the political course of its members in the county, the Union League received letters from Wiley Taylor, William Taylor, Thomas Jackson, and Fred Mann, colored, who lived near Leggets, and members at Battleboro, of withdrawal, since they did not wish to be held responsible for acts committed by the league. Following their resignations Steven Conyers and George Arrington resigned, and Taylor and others joined the Democratic Club at Tarboro. Prosecution of negroes who voted the conservative ticket continued as late as 1875, at which time James H. Harris, a loyal negro of the South and a Democrat, together with Sam Base, of Toisnot, were attacked by a mob of black Republicans and shot, after escaping from their hands.

The Union League of the county is deeply indebted to one "General" Wiley D. Jones, of Battleboro, whose name was unfamiliar to Edgecombe history until 1868. His achievements were marked with rascality and corrupt swindling of innocent negroes. The multifarious acts of the Union League and the rise of loyal organizations had necessitated a law to forbid meeting of secret societies. Jones saw the way to continue his designs, and im-

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<sup>1</sup> The Ku Klux.



mediately advised the negroes not to hold any more league meetings, since it was unlawful, but to hold prayer meetings, which were only league meetings in disguise. Accounts from 1869 to 1875 indicate that the negro suddenly became extremely religious.

The political effects of the Union League will be disclosed in the various elections which were held in the county from 1866 to 1880. It seems befitting, although distasteful and abhorrent, to give a record of the crimes perpetrated in the name of reconstruction under northern rule and the Union League. It is impossible to read a State paper during this period without reading of some brutal murder or incendiary fires, while the Tarboro paper was inflated with the occurrence of crime and violence. It seems as if the negro had been allowed to release his passion and infest civilization with his new-born liberty. Many of these crimes bear memory to people now living that overshadow the deeds of the dark days of the War between the states. It seems, however, mention should be made of the fact that in many instances the negro was the misguided tool of men of the North.

The economic life of the people in the county at this period was constantly imperiled. The farmer who had his dwelling, his stable, or his barn reduced to ashes was frequently ruined. Edgecombe County in two months in 1869 lost two churches, eight cotton gins, a cotton factory, and numerous barns and buildings, all being incendiary origin. In addition, plunder and theft destroyed thousands of dollars worth of property following a fire. The Union Leagues of the county entered into an agreement for arson and robbery. They were well organized for this purpose. Three unsuccessful attempts were made to burn a block in Tarboro in 1868. On October 14, 1869, oil was placed in some old boxes in a narrow lane between the old S. E. Moore place and the store occupied by R. A. Sizer. The flames were discovered and put out. In 1867 Tarboro had one fire which cost fifty thousand dollars. The fire began in B. J. Keech's stables and in the rear of several business houses. It was traced to incendiary origin. When the stores were burning, the goods were plundered and much stolen. An entire square was consumed. Colonel C. W. Smith, of the Penny Hill plantation, had his gin house burned in February, 1870, at which time two good gins, 1,500 bushels of corn, and 5,000 bushels of cotton seed were destroyed.

The confusion in the civil government and the support given the Union League by the State Government, under Holden, caused an increase of crime in the county. In addition the judges who came to the county to hold court were usually radicals or radical sympathizers. Judge Moore held court with a jury consisting of eleven negroes and only one white man in 1868. These negroes were of the lowest type.

Incidents of negro crimes increased in intensity; while white men were subjected to violence at their hands and innocent women were frequently overpowered and ruined. In 1866 a young man named George E. Griffin, a clerk at Whitakers, pushed a negro, who was newly elected magistrate, aside from the depot platform for some white ladies to pass. The negro swore out a warrant before a negro magistrate, John Judge, and gave same to a deputized negro, who was ordered to take Griffin dead or alive or carry his head. The negro went to the store where Griffin was shaving. Griffin had his pistol over a shelf. The negro reached for the pistol and Griffin asked for it back, all the time walking for the door. As he turned to go out the door, the negro shot him in the back. A crowd of white people heard of the incident and went to the magistrate, but received no satisfaction. The negro in the meantime had been captured and taken to Tarboro, where he was tried and sentenced to death. Judge Jones set aside the sentence, and gave the negro ten years. The negro was sent to Raleigh, and after a short time was pardoned by Holden.

Two negroes, Lawrence Powell and Cornelius Pittman, murdered Cowan, a Jew merchant, in Whitakers. These negroes were tried and sentenced for first degree murder. They appealed and were convicted the second time. It was near election time, and Governor Holden was scheduled to speak at Halifax. He learned of the case through the Union League and pardoned the negroes as the rope was placed around their necks to pay the penalty.

In September, 1869, O. M. Mayo was assaulted in his home by a negro about seven miles from Tarboro. He was severely beaten and was made unconscious. In October, 1868, two ladies, mother and daughter, were traveling from Tarboro to their home in the country and had their trunk stolen from behind their buggy, losing \$600 in specie, a large sum in greenbacks and their entire ward-

robe. In the Edgecombe County Court in December, 1866, three-fourths of the cases concerned freedmen and members of the league. The military commander issued an order forbidding negroes to be bound out, and the jail became crowded. In June court, 1867, ninety cases were freedmen, while court for March had omitted all civil cases to try criminals only; the total number of criminal cases were 775. Court for March, 1868, had 100 cases, all freedmen. The expense of confining them for one quarter was over \$1,000. As late as 1875 seven freedmen were convicted and sentenced to be hung, six for murder and one for rape.

During the month of May, 1867, Gus Holmes, John Stevens, Jordan Dancy, Hardy Lloyd, and John Morgan, all negroes of the Union League, broke into the railroad office at Tarboro, stole an iron safe containing express money and made away with it.

On March 17, 1870, the grocery store of King and Williams was robbed in daylight of \$996 in currency and several dollars in company orders. Other cases of robbery and assault could be mentioned. Usually the acts of the league were mysterious, but later evidence would be obtained. On March 13, 1867, Bennet Hayne, of the vicinity of Leggets, left home to invite some friends to a gathering at his home. He met a party of whites and blacks, and in resisting an attack by them was severely beaten and became unconscious. He was found by an old negro man, who assisted in getting him home. About the same time a citizen of the county was seen to cross the Norfolk bridge, but never returned. In 1868 A. M. Weber had two attempts at his life, the last time being called to the door and struck over the head with a club. The would-be assassin began to rob, but was interrupted by people passing.

Frequently when negroes were detected and arrested they were released by the Union League. In September, 1868, a negro was arrested for larceny; a gang of Union Leaguers and regular delegates to the convention of 1868 for the district endeavored to liberate him.

The negroes occasionally in their moments of frenzy killed each other. In January, 1867, George Holmes, a mulatto, was a candidate for office and lost. He immediately shot Matthew King, his successful competitor. The smell of blood was indeed strong, and a frightened, agitated, impulsive man who had been

given liberty of passion after years of bondage knew no law but the law of license. Dempsey Morgan, a negro, was charged with beating his wife and came clear. He accused his wife of being the cause of his arrest and struck her dead, and disembowelled her.

Although the better class of whites had to tolerate this condition of crime, they bore it under protest. Especially was this true when the sanctity of the home was invaded by their former slaves, who for the most part had been treated kindly and with compassion. The patience of the people was restrained by the forces of the Federals when the acme of torture was reached in the criminal assault upon their women. Before freedom was granted to the negro it was unheard of for him to assault or rape a white woman. Negro and mistress worked together in the field and home. The negro acted as her protector in the absence of husband and father during the War between the states. Even during the last days of the War, when negroes from the county were joining the Federal forces and the Freedman's Bureau, the white women were unmolested. But with the coming of their northern sponsors preaching the doctrine of social equality, the sanctity of woman was no longer respected.

The first case of rape was in number 5 township. Almost immediately afterward another case occurred in township number 6. In January, 1868, Gus Rogers, a negro, raped a white woman in Rocky Mount. In December, 1869, Lew Hines was convicted for rape on a white girl. The subject is repulsive, and only for the sake of attempting to give an idea of the awful days of reconstruction are these cases stated. It is essential to notice that it was only during the day of reconstruction that any such condition prevailed.

It is interesting to note that with all the crime committed no attempt was made at lynching during the reign of Federal agencies. However, there was one case that bordered on mob execution. Gray Hargrove was slain by a negro, Jim Hargrave, a slave belonging to General Lewis, superintendent of the Tarboro and Weldon Railroad, before the war. General Lewis and others, upon learning of the deed, drew the negro up by his thumbs. The negro hung too long and the act almost resulted in death. Realizing the seriousness of the act and knowing that



the negro would go to the Freedman's Bureau, General Lewis went first and explained the affair as it occurred. The agent of the bureau replied: "I don't give a d—n, there are plenty more."

In order to check the lawlessness and violence in the county a branch of an existing organization, the Ku Klux Klan, was formed. The method of organization of the Ku Klux, like that of the Union League, is disclosed in Halminton's *History of Reconstruction*, and for want of space is omitted here. General N. B. Forest, of Western Tennessee, was the reputed head. In its early formation in the county the society was composed of able and conservative men. The clan had a small muster and carried out the instructions of the leader. Unfortunately very little was published in the local papers concerning the society's activities, and since the remaining few old citizens express reluctance in telling of its operations, very little is known. From private information, however, one act of suppression in the county was obtained that is worthy of narration. During the year 1870 in which lawlessness and crime were at the highest, and just as the Republican party was losing its power in the county, eleven negroes who were believed to be guilty of assaults on white women and burning were secured by members of the Ku Klux, conducted to Hendrick's Creek, about one mile from Tarboro, and emasculated. During the scene it was told that as many negro politicians as could be gathered together were forced to witness the operation. One of the ablest negro leaders in the county became frightened and left Tarboro between daylight and dark, and when next heard from was in Washington City. It was several years before he ever came back to the county. This act terrified the negroes in the county, and prevented repetition of crime.

It is declared by good authority that men who were guilty of offenses of a minor character received a better trial at the hands of the Ku Klux than by the courts. There was, however, no recourse for the victims of the order and no retaliation. That it did much good in quelling crime is indisputable, by the decline of crime after the organization appeared. After 1875 a bad element of whites began to get into the Klan, and since its purpose was about accomplished the leading citizens began to withdraw. In addition to this the negro began to realize that the northern man was his enemy instead of his friend, and after the forty acres and



a mule never materialized he began to lean toward the native whites. This statement is well demonstrated by a negro man who lived on Captain R. H. Gatlin's farm in the county. This negro had voted the Republican ticket and belonged to the Union League. This negro came to Captain Gatlin often and asked him to read the political news, and made this statement: "I am firmly convinced that the Democratic party will work for the best interests of the negro." This colored man frequently spoke to the members of his race, and on one occasion he had over one hundred negroes in front of him hissing and hooting him down. He backed himself against a tree and told them that they could kill him, but they could not shut his mouth, that this was a free country and that free speech was allowed, and he intended to say what he pleased. In his attempts to lead his race into better things, it was reported that he exercised sound logic and said things his opponents could not confute.

When the General Assembly in 1871 passed a law to abolish all secret political organizations, the Ku Klux disbanded, or all the best element withdrew. Its influence, however, was retained by parties were were banded together to protect the innocent.

In order to brighten the negroes' hope, when political issues were first agitated, the northern men promised the negro forty acres of his former master's land and one mule. Their slogan was bottom rail on top, or now negro up and white man down. Induced by this theory, advanced and advocated by corrupt politicians, the poor emancipated negro with ten thousand or more just freed, and with many white men disfranchised by the Federal Government, it was nothing but logical that they should vote for the radicals. The first court was made up of negroes, and was termed the "Mongrel Constitution."

The election in 1869 is an index to the political conditions, and the humiliation the citizens had to suffer. All citizens of the county who had been members of the Legislature, and had held local offices, were disfranchised, as well as those who had borne arms against the United States. Every negro, however, who could boast a man's clothes had the chance to vote. A greater farce had never been enacted. Quite a few white people were

present, but only the radical element were permitted to vote. The Democrats stood with hands in pockets—innocent spectators, while the radicals carried the election.

When the voting was over the ballots were not sent to the court house to be verified, and the result reported to Raleigh, in order that the vote of the State might be known, but was sent direct to General Canby, the autocratic ruler of the Carolinas, in Charleston, S. C. From the list of elected candidates it will be seen how many strangers in politics were successful in securing office in the county. For history's sake a result of the election in the different townships of the county, as shown by the returns to the Board of Commissioners, is given:

Tarboro township elected Alexander McCabe, B. J. Keech, and J. H. M. Jackson (colored) as magistrates, and W. H. Shaw as clerk, E. Zoeller as constable, and John King, T. W. Harvey and David Harriss (colored) as school committee.

Alexander McCabe came to Edgecombe County (Tarboro) before becoming twenty-one years old from New York State, where he was connected with wealthy and prominent people. His purpose in coming South was to engage in the mercantile business. He was a man of good impulses and enjoyed considerable popularity among the people of Tarboro. He married the eldest daughter of Samuel Moore, a citizen of Tarboro. At this time Mr. McCabe became active in the Republican party and was soon its recognized leader. He was of Irish descent and possessed many characteristics of that people. It is reported that he exercised a kindly feeling toward the disfranchised whites, and safeguarded their property and frequently their personal safety.

LOWER CONETOE elected W. T. Cobb and Henry Telfair (colored) as magistrates. *Clerk*, William A. Jones; *Constable*, E. E. Knight; *School Committee*, George W. Harriss, William Harrell, Frederick Bryan.

UPPER CONETOE—*Magistrates*, James Howard, John Bryan (colored); *Clerk*, Benjamin Staton; *Constable*, James Howell; *School Committee*, William S. Long, Staton Whichard, James B. Station.

DEEP CREEK:—*Magistrates*, M. P. Edwards, John H. Edwards; *Clerk*, B. T. Mayo; *Constable*, A. T. Parker; *School Committee*, D. B. Batts, E. M. Bryan, Israel Merritt (colored).

LOWER FISHING CREEK:—*Magistrates*, Benjamin Johnson (colored), Almon Hart; *Clerk*, C. G. Wilkinson; *Constable*, Alfred Warren; *School Committee*, H. L. Leggett, D. W. Bullock, J. W. Johnson.

UPPER FISHING CREEK:—*Magistrates*, Mathew Allen (colored), Samuel G. Jenkins (colored); *Clerk*, A. Dawson (colored); *Constable*, J. Simmons (colored); *School Committee*, L. Garrett (colored), Carter Bellamy (colored), N. Bellamy (colored).

SWIFT CREEK:—*Magistrates*, K. C. Pope, Willis Brown (colored); *Clerk*, James R. Odom; *Constable*, S. D. Pool; *School Committee*, Carey Bellamy (colored), Ned Curtis (colored), Washington Taylor (colored).

SPARTA:—*Magistrates*, William S. Duggan, Frederick Green (colored); *Clerk*, James B. W. Norville; *Constable*, William R. Cobb; *School Committee*, R. S. Williams, Elias Carr, J. L. Wiggins.

OTTERS CREEK:—*Magistrates*, Joseph Cobb, Watson Harrell; *Clerk*, Battle Thorne; *Constable*, Elisha Harrell; *School Committee*, W. G. Webb, K. C. Lewis, Bennett Hagins.

LOWER TOWNSHIP, No. 10:—*Magistrates*, M. B. Atkinson, J. C. Moore; *Clerk*, Theophilus Atkinson; *Constable*, John Lewis; *School Committee*, Hiram Webb, John Walston, John T. Weaver.

WALNUT CREEK:—*Magistrates*, A. B. Nobles, W. H. Knight; *Clerk*, J. W. Garrett; *Constable*, Joshua Killebrew; *School Committee*, C. B. Killebrew, S. D. Proctor, General Bullock (colored).

ROCKY MOUNT:—*Magistrates*, Spencer Fountain, John H. Harrison, John N. Taylor; *Clerk*, T. H. Ruffin; *Constable*, John Pearce.

COKEY:—*Magistrates*, David Lane, James F. Jenkins; *Clerk*, Lawrence Lane; *Constable*, John Lancaster; *School Committee*, Bythel G. Brown, Guilford Moore, Samuel Clark.

UPPER TOWN CREEK:—*Magistrates*, J. J. Sharp, L. L. Lancaster; *Clerk*, Jesse W. Williams; *Constable*, C. S. Braswell; *School Committee*, John P. Wynn, Jeremiah Batts, Toney Robbins (colored).

After the election two leading negroes conceived the idea of serving the Government in the capacity of postmaster at Tarboro. One thought that a long list of names to his petition would aid him in receiving the position, and so forged the signature of a

large number of negro names and forwarded the same to Washington. The matter was referred to the Congressman from this district; there it was discovered that the applicant was without political support. The Congressman in turn referred the matter to the members of the Legislature from Edgecombe, when the fraud was discovered and nipped in the bud.

After a careful examination of the names returned in the election, the Democrats expressed their surprise and pleasure at the result. In one township the influence of the Union League was sufficient to overbalance all other consideration and an entire negro ticket was elected—notwithstanding the exertion of the moderate white Republicans. In another township the result of effective compromises resulted in the election of some of the county's best men to office.

With an overwhelming majority the negroes elected but twenty of their own color, out of one hundred offices to be filled, and in a great number of townships this result was effected through a spirit of conciliation and compromise on their part. It was only natural to expect the negro to give way to the white Republican's ambition when he was to reap reward by being second fiddler. In fact, the negro voter during the time he enjoyed unrestrained political power, remained at the foot of the Republican party. Out of the average 9,000 Republican majority from 1868 to 1880, in the second congressional district, only five per cent were whites, but the majority of offices were without exception given to this five per cent.

During the campaign of 1869 the county polled 3,800 votes, and of these only fifty were white. The number of negro voters in 1867 was 2,593 compared to 1,194 whites. In 1870 the figures grew even worse, when, out of a total population of 22,970, only 7,858 were white, including sixty-four foreign birth. The negro population had increased over 5,000 in number in less than ten years, whereas the whites showed only an increase of 1,979 in the same length of time.

The feeling of triumph over a Democratic gain in 1870 over the previous election was considered a victory and the result was expressed by two of Edgecombe's most able citizens. Judge Howard said: "So happy an escape from absolute despotism, so complete a repudiation of our base calumniators; so glorious a return



of liberty and good government surely demand great rejoicing." Governor Clark said: "In the midst of bayonets and military prisons we have achieved a signal and bloodless victory with no crime on our hands and no blood on our flag. While we are proud of our people, we may safely trust them in the great contest for civil liberty."

For the whites to dominate the negro in politics was a problem greater than that of how England conquered India with India's own troops. It was indeed singular how this number of men could rule 3,780 negroes and keep them in almost absolute political subjection. Bryan, Cobb, Duggan, Keech, Lancaster, McCabe, and Robbins took the offices which paid a good salary, such as register of deeds, clerk, sheriff, treasurer, and supplied the negro with non-paying places in the Legislature. This procedure, however, beneficial as it was to the poor whites and detrimental to the negro, was not to be permanent.

Three factors caused a complete reversion in the political monopoly; emigration of whites, change in the State Constitution, and the awakening realization of the negroes themselves. The most prominent of these was the growing restlessness of the ambitious negro.

In January, 1873, when it became apparent that things were going from bad to worse with no prospects of a change for the better, many of the oldest and more peaceful citizens, began to change places of residence. Emigration assumed such proportions that an "Emigration Association" was formed, with E. B. Borden as treasurer. Edgecombe County contributed \$300 at one time to assist in the movement. The *Richmond Examiner*, in commenting on emigration from the eastern counties of North Carolina, said that of the several parties passing through Richmond, many were grey-haired men of sixty years, while several were children only four months old. The parties reported they were going to the western and northwestern states because they found it impossible to live at home. Many sold their land for \$1.50 per acre, and several only had money enough to carry them as far as Cincinnati. There evidently was much suffering in the county. In one month alone one hundred and twelve white families purchased emigration tickets at the depot at Tarboro; certainly some of these



were leaving the State permanently. The question of the county's becoming depopulated began to attract State attention before the close of the summer of 1873.

In the meantime the fact that the best citizens of the State had no voice in the county government began to be felt. Hence a change was made in suffrage requirements by the constitutional convention of 1875. At the same time the appointment of magistrates was vested in the Legislature, and the magistrates in turn elected five county commissioners to manage county affairs. Before this change in the Constitution the radicals inflicted a great curse upon the white people of the county by mismanagement. Plunder and extravagance were the rule, and honesty and economy the exception. The changes made by the revised constitutional proceeding proved Edgecombe's salvation, although many at that time exercised some disappointment. This bill passed in 1877 without altering the tenure of office of the Justices of Peace and county commissioners then in office.

In the meantime the fact that the negroes constituted such a great majority gave indications that radical domination might continue. Especially was this true in regard to town administration. This field of activity offered a greater opportunity in exercising tact and ingenuity than that of county or State politics. To meet this political emergency arose William Pippin. He conceived a plan by which the whites could control town affairs in Tarboro. The old citizens will recall that prior to 1875 there were no wards or districts in the town of Tarboro; in fact, no such provision had been anticipated in the town charter. A census of the city showed that the negroes had the majority and invariably elected all three town commissioners. Mr. Pippin appeared before the State Legislature and succeeded in having the charter amended, dividing the town into three wards. The first and second wards contained the majority of whites in the central part of town, while the third ward included the suburbs, where the negroes lived. This placed the negroes in a position to carry only one ward, and the whites the remaining two wards, and negro domination collapsed.

The county government after 1868 to 1875, gave the people the right to elect county commissioners, magistrates, and school com-

mitteemen.<sup>1</sup> This made county government exclusively a local affair, and if the Democrats had a majority, the county government passed under Democratic control. On the other hand, a constitutional amendment of 1875, which placed within the power of the Legislature to pass the law putting in force the new form of government, the county, if it voted solidly Democratic, would not necessarily have a Democratic controlled government, since the State Legislature may be Republican. The latter would be more than probable on account of the great negro majority in other counties in the State, as well as in Edgecombe. This looking into the future caused a demand for repeal of the system then known as "Canby" system. The Tarboro paper says, however, when it became known it would be impossible to secure a repeal, it was a great disappointment to the people, but if it was the best the county's friend could do for the people, "we must needs be contented."

In order to show the reparation made during the reconstruction regime it becomes necessary to discuss the rule under the two parties. The amount of taxes levied for the county for the year 1867 was \$14,681.00 to pay expenses of county, government and schools. Up until March of 1868 only \$9,696.07 had been collected, leaving a deficit of \$4,984.93. Add to this the increasing cost due to criminal cases which were rapidly increasing, the county expense was more than \$8,000.00 behind at the close of this year. In 1866 the Republican commissioners were liberal in aiding the needy. The burden of war had caused a large number of citizens to become dependent on the county for aid. This aid lasted for several years. One instance which serves to show the expense of such a liberal policy was Mrs. A. A. Moore, of Tarboro. To her the commissioners gave 3,000 pounds of pork at 12½¢ per pound, 10 pounds of flour at \$15.00 per barrel, 20 pounds of corn at \$5.00 per pound, \$100.00 worth of sugar, \$60.00 of coffee, \$40.00 worth of molasses, 30 cords of wood, costing \$150.00, \$15.00 worth of salt, \$3.00 worth of pepper and spice,

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1868 there were no county commissioners. The county court attended to all duties which were later delegated to county commissioners.

and a loom wheel and cards at the cost of \$200.00, making total gift of \$1,013.00. In this case, however, the husband who was deceased had left an estate unsettled, and was supposed of some value. This attitude on the part of the party in power was badly abused, and caused fatal financial results. At this time the disfranchised whites had not had their rights returned, and north-erners and negroes dominated the county.

After the white people were franchised, the finances were handled some better, and when the Republicans turned over the county government there was less deficit than in the year 1867. Considerable credit is due to John Norfleet for the control of the county finances. He had been associated with the Confederate Government and received his amnesty in 1868. He later became a Republican and clerk of court, a position he had formerly occupied as early as 1841. He was a good business man, administrative official, honest and judicious. He had the reputation of being the best clerk in the State. After he was defeated for clerk he did the business of a lawyer, although he never received his license. He could draw a will and handle legal matters relating to property with much success. He was also a man of fine business judgment. He was always anxious to serve the people, and when Edgecombe County had its government restored in 1868 he watched carefully over its interest, and was elected mayor in 1874.

Immediately after war a meeting was called to appoint county officers. H. C. Bourne gave a barbecue prior to the call for a convention. Mr. Bourne, as were a goodly number of others, was in politics for what it gave, and he suggested a place of chief justice at a salary of \$1,500.00 a year. The present Captain R. H. Gatlin, of Tarboro, went to see Mr. Norfleet and told him the circumstances and asked him if enough could be influenced to vote for him in the election, would he serve. Mr. Norfleet in his characteristic way said: "I don't believe any man ought to refuse to serve his people."

When the convention was called Mr. Gatlin received recognition and requested that the salary of Chief Justice be set before nomi-

nations were made. To this Mr. Bourne objected, but the move of Mr. Gatlin's was seconded, and the salary was set at \$3.00 per day for each day served by the Chief Justice of the County Court. It was largely through Mr. Norfleet's efforts that expenses were kept down. The alarming increase gave Edgcombe the name throughout the State as a "Paradise for Thieves," where people rioted in great recklessness, and the criminal docket was blackened with every crime known to the penal code.

In 1879 effort was made to reduce taxation by imposing extra revenue tax. This served to release the poll tax from eighty-nine cents to seventy-two, but the increase in revenue was still not sufficiently increased to offset the debit incurred and to pay operating expenses.

At the end of the War there was no debt if that which the Supreme Court decided to be unconstitutional. Some of this debt, however, was paid by a Republican board of commissioners. From April, 1865, to September 5, 1868, the expense of county government was \$20,300, which was presented to the Board of Audit. In addition there were several thousand dollars not presented which was later discovered and ordered paid by the Democratic board when it came in power. Of this amount \$1,500 was outstanding school orders and a debt due the school fund of \$2,000. From 1868 to 1878, when Benjamin Norfleet, Robert Norfleet, Republicans, and W. H. Johnson, H. D. Teal, and W. H. Knight, Democrats, were taken out of control and J. C. Dancy, T. U. Whitted, and Clinton Cattle, colored, regained power, the cost of county government rose to \$24,000 annually, while under sane white Republican rule it was less than half the amount. The Democrats made even a better showing, but this was due to a return of stable government and economy.

From December 1, 1875, to December 1, 1876, Republican rule cost \$23,925.92. From December 1, 1876, to December 1, 1878, under Republican rule the cost was \$18,777.55. December 1, 1877, to December 1, 1878, last year of Republican rule, the cost was \$20,978.55. From December 1, 1878, to December 1, 1879, the first year under Democratic rule was \$7,687.12, while from December 1, 1879, to August 1, 1880, constituting seven months expense,



the amount was \$6,492.73. The success of an administration is measured by financial results. A comparative statement, therefore, is given of the expenditures under the two administrations:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Receipts</i>	<i>Disb's</i>	<i>Bal. On Hand</i>
1870	Rep.	\$23,195.63	\$23,195.63	
1871	"	24,343.81	24,343.81	
1872	"	28,264.72	28,264.72	
1873	"	29,420.15	29,420.15	
1874	"	24,730.75	24,730.75	
1875	"	26,048.61	26,048.61	
1876	"	17,467.44	17,467.44	
1878	"	18,312.08	18,312.08	
		<hr/>	<hr/>	
		\$191,783.19	\$191,783.19	

In addition during the Republican regime revenue was received from sale of real estate which was also expended:

	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Disb's</i>
Sale of 98 acres of land	\$1,788.50	
Half acre town lot	550.00	
One hundred and fifty-four acres of land	2,249.00	
Half acre town lot	539.00	
Part of courthouse lot	790.39	
Part of courthouse lot	1,875.00	
		<hr/>
Total	\$7,791.89	\$7,791.89
Grand Total	\$199,575.08	\$199,575.08

<i>Year</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Receipts</i>	<i>Disb's</i>	<i>Bal. On Hand</i>
1879	Dem.	\$16,428.15	\$16,353.74	\$ 75.41
1880	"	18,092.29	14,408.75	3,683.54
1881	"	21,719.44	14,576.73	7,142.71

The funded debt of the county in 1880 was \$15,000 and at the close of the year there was an available cash balance of about \$12,000. The first Democratic board, however, paid a part of the old indebtedness of about \$4,000, which would have increased the amount of balance on hand at the close of 1880. The Republicans in ten years administration reduced the county debt of only \$1,005.78. Another fact is also worthy of notice is that the average receipts under Democratic control was \$7,493.64 or only

\$26 more than the Republicans received in 1876 and 1877, making the average receipts under the Republicans \$23,972.89, and \$17,493.64 under the Democrats; a difference of \$6,479.25 more each year for Republicans than the Democrats had.

As a closing comparison of the prevailing conditions citation is made of the distribution of the county tax for the year 1875. It was distributed as follows:

General Fund	\$15,005.92
Poor Fund	10,598.17
School Fund	8,773.77
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Total	\$34,377.77

Against the general fund and poor fund orders were issued as follows:

Poor	\$9,444.95
Juries	881.86
Prosecutions	786.93
Prisoners in Jail	6,480.42
Bridges	2,664.61
Miscellaneous	6,331.17
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Total	\$26,589.94

From the above account it is to be noticed that the deficit was met, as was the custom, from the school fund.

The closing years of the reconstruction witnessed improvement in both finances and party feeling. The economic life of the people was becoming more stable, and political animosities less apparent. The logical solution for party differences were consummated in politics following 1865, and direction is made to this discussion.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RECONSTRUCTION—POLITICS

One of the most ill-timed conditions continued, although political conditions in the county were gradually getting better. It became necessary under the radical rules for any one accepting public office to take an oath, a "Test Oath," before being allowed to enjoy political position. This oath caused the office holder to swear that he had not borne voluntary service against the United States, that no aid had been given, that no assumption of office had been made of any office in any government of authority or pretended authority in hostility to the United States, and that no support had been given to any government hostile to the United States. In addition a solemn oath of allegiance to the United States was administered.

The results of this test oath are plainly seen. Whereas apparent franchise was being given to ex-Confederate soldiers and government officials, the power to hold office again was deprived them, due to the fact one could not subscribe to the test oath who had in any way participated in the Confederate cause. A true loyal southerner would not sell his birthright. In order to regain complete citizenship he had to take the oath, consequently it was sometime after 1868 before opportunities for political advancement were opened. Doubtless many unscrupulous men in the county perjured themselves for a few hundred dollars a year. Peace be to their ashes.

General Sickles, soon after he took command under the Federal Government, issued an order declaring the civil government of the State provisional. For convenience of the military government the State was immediately divided into eleven districts. Tarboro, according to her geographical location, was in the eastern district, with Newbern as headquarters and Captain Horace James in command.

The original plan of Colonel Whittlesey, General Sickles's subordinate, was to make each county a subdistrict, and he wrote every member of the convention of 1868, then in session, asking suggestions of desirable men to act as agents. He appeared, how-

ever, to disapprove the appointment of any except military officers, and as there was a lack of these, two to eight counties were included in each subdistrict.

The chief agency to effect his designs was the Freedman's Bureau. That it was used in the hands of designing men for corrupt purposes cannot be contradicted. The chief complaint, however, was not corruption, but of inefficiency and improper management. The Bureau at Tarboro proved to be an influence for good, such also was true at Raleigh, Charlotte, and Salisbury.

General Sickles had the power to remove civil officers, but he did not exercise this right of removal to any great extent. However, when the question arose as to his right to remove civil officers, he wrote Attorney General Stanberry that without military control order could not be maintained. Only in one or two instances was Tarboro affected; the first time was in a town election, which was suspended until the reconstruction acts could go into effect.

In another instance General Sickles had ordered, in general order No. 32, that all citizens who had been assessed for taxes and had paid them were qualified to serve as jurors, and the proper civil officers were ordered to revise the jury lists in accordance with the order. This, although it admitted negroes, was in accordance with the North Carolina law and custom. Governor Worth asked General Sickles to suspend his jury order until October, when it could be ascertained who paid taxes when the sheriff made his returns. Accordingly Judge Barnes in June adjourned Edgecombe Superior Court, because negroes had not been summoned in accordance with General Sickles's order. Judge Barnes was criticized for this act, because the court was ordered held before the order was issued, and the laws existing prior to 1861 were considered as valid. Whatever Judge Barnes's opinion, it is a safe conclusion that his attitude tended to ameliorate the condition and bring about a better policy toward the Federal Government. It had the effect, however, of causing several magistrates to resign.

It is well to recall that at this time the Republican convention was in session at Raleigh, March 27, 1867, composed of ninety-seven whites and forty-nine negro delegates, and that a platform had been adopted denouncing secession and endorsing the



supremacy of the Federal Government. It also approved the measures of civil rights and enfranchisement without any property qualifications, conferred without distinction of color. No Federal Court had been held since 1861. This was due to the military rule and internal state of political chaos. It was August 10, 1867, before the Federal Court was resumed.

Immediately following the assumption of political domination by General Canby under the Federal Government, in 1867, Edgecombe County was divided into fourteen districts. The plan of operation was to appoint a captain for each district for the purpose of supervising the ballot and to exercise more or less jurisdiction over political affairs. The original design, however, proved a failure in consequence of the registration board's inability to procure suitable persons to act as captains and open polls in each district. In addition radical changes had been made in the county government. General Canby dominated the Constitution of 1868, and adopted a county system of his own liking which was patterned after northern ideas. It was 1877 before the old system was redeemed and county affairs were improved.

It was difficult to secure registers. The oath required was such but few natives could stretch their consciences to take it, and suitable northern men in the county had been exhausted. Three of the registers appointed in 1867, M. M. Lowe, W. H. Knapp, white, and Willis Brown, colored, failed to qualify.

The entire county was then consolidated into two voting districts, one being at Tarboro, and the other at Rocky Mount, five districts voting at Tarboro and the remainder at Rocky Mount.

In the appeal for the formation of counties for the election, orders were issued for a popular vote for a constitutional convention and delegates. Tarboro gave 1,191 votes for the convention, with 234 against. The votes for delegates were as follows: H. Baker, 1,352; H. A. Dowd, 1,348; and H. C. Cherry, negro, 1,325. Rocky Mount polled 1,129 for the convention and 1,503 against, and gave Baker 319 votes, Dowd 320, and Cherry 233. Accordingly Baker, Dowd, and Cherry represented Edgecombe in framing the Constitution of 1868. The large majority was considered by the conservatives a victory in the county, as the blacks, if united, could have voted more than two to one. By electing this ticket the county procured the services of two good white men

—one a colonel in the Confederate service and the other a Confederate surgeon. Although the election went off quietly, with both races behaving in a commendable manner, the purpose for which the vote was cast was not comprehended by the majority. A visitor from New Haven, Connecticut, was residing temporarily in Tarboro. Although a Republican politician, he wrote back to the *New Haven Register* that in the election for the purpose of voting for or against a convention very few whites voted, and that the voting was done by the intelligent (with an interrogation mark) contraband who did not know whether he was voting for "George Washington or a new town-pump." He ended his letter by remarking that he hoped there may be an improvement in the next generation, for there was certainly room for it.

The results of the election for this year, however, illustrated a most obvious condition in local politics. The number of white voters were 1,194, as against 2,593 blacks. The number of voters listed in the county was greater than those registered. After deducting the one-third nontaxed, the number listed was as great as those registered, no doubt attributable to the fact that the farmers in the county listed employees on the farm.

The convention of 1865 was in no sense representative from a Democratic view, since it was not a call of the people, but of a provisional government that was out of sympathy with the people. Yet notwithstanding this fact the delegates elected could perform a beneficial work. Judge Howard had been a delegate to the Secession Convention, and S. F. Philips had acquired considerable experience in public life. Mr. Philips was appointed on the committee to suggest business for the convention. This committee's report gave appointment to subcommittees to consider the ordinance of secession, the abolition of slavery, revision of the Constitution, Justices of the Peace, acts of the law, legislative courts since 1861 and other issues effecting financial, political, and economic life in North Carolina.

In spite of the concurrent of opinion which prevailed at the beginning of the convention, it was apparent that clashes of opinion would result. Especially was this true since it became necessary to undo the work of the convention of 1861. It, therefore, became logical to observe a sharp difference in the opinion in Judge Howard. As it was in the past and is at the present,

the western counties were arrayed against the eastern—the matter became one of conflict between “opinion and sentiment.” There were those present from the western counties who were not lacking in loud resentment of the secession leaders, whose Unionism was of personal bitterness. In characteristic manner Judge Howard, to adopt his words, “had more faith in those who, without making loud professions of what they have always felt and believed, honestly give up all their past ideas, and avow themselves henceforth good citizens of the United States than in those whose fierce zeal for the Union slumbered during all the years of secession, and only broke out in the hour of the triumph of the Union cause, or in other words, a conquered Rebel will, to my thinking, be much more easily converted into a good citizen than most of these North Carolina Unionists.”

The first clash came in the discussion of the nullification of the ordinance of secession. A resolution to abrogate the secession ordinance was adopted. A sharp debate followed, being led by Judge Howard. He declared that he voted for secession in 1861, but was convinced of its failure, and would do all in his power to revise its effect; and that so far as the United States Government was concerned the ordinance of secession had always been considered null and void, but to the people of North Carolina it was accepted in good faith, and thus maintained by them for four years. Judge Howard did not care to have the responsibility of taking it away. The drafter of the resolution, B. F. Moore, favored it because it would obtain right of citizenship. S. F. Phillips expressed the sound sentiment of many, when he said: “The convention of 1861 had expressed an opinion one way, a body of equal rank should register a counter opinion, as the functions of a convention of the people are both legislative and judicial,” it could either repeal or declare null and void the act of a former body. A tentative vote was rejected by a vote of 94 to 20, with Howard voting against it. After the third reading Judge Howard again voted in the negative. Judge Howard related that just before the third reading Judge Manly and D. D. Ferebee were about to leave the hall, but remained with him. Some one turned to him and said: “Howard, let it be unanimous. You have already voted.” Judge Howard replied, “I’ll see you damned

first." Although opposition was strong on the part of the minority the act of secession in North Carolina was abrogated.

In 1868 the negroes still followed a northern political party. The Democratic party in North Carolina allied itself with the National Democratic Party. That alliance expanded and prevails today. To cement a working union between the two, J. B. Whitaker, William Robinson, and J. W. Edmunson, acting as a county committee under the provision enacted by the State convention, held in Goldsboro, appointed George Howard as delegate and William S. Battle as alternate to attend the National Democratic Convention, held at New York, July 4, 1868.

The letters of acceptance of the two men, especially that of Mr. Battle, express the sentiments of the leading thinkers of the day. Considerable light is thrown upon the condition which culminated in political ties in after years. After expressing the opinion that the war was not a rebellion, but a right as the South saw it, Mr. Battle says in part: "To the great National Democratic Party of the North we look in our extremity. It is the only political organization which has shown the least indication of according to us that justice which, sooner or later, history will award us."

Judge Howard, while more concise, voiced a hopeful future when he wrote the committee that the people had but to be prudent, firm, and just to have their principles triumphantly vindicated.

The people in 1868 began to show signs of a new political life. Many who were still disfranchised sought emancipation from their political bondage. It was this year that William S. Battle, James Cobb, Redden S. Petway, R. N. Proctor, John I. Killebrew, John Norfleet, R. H. Austin, Robert Norfleet, William H. Knight, William W. Parker, Jesse Mercer, Exum S. Moore, John W. Johnson, Thomas Norfleet, Micajah P. Edwards, Lewellyn Harrell, Lawrence Bunting, William H. Johnson, of Edgecombe, received a removal of political disability by act of Congress. At the same time R. R. Bridgers, of Confederate fame, received his political right after more than two years of constant effort. In 1880 disabilities imposed by the fourteenth amendment were removed by Congress in behalf of Thomas W. Hussey, J. E. Lindsay, and J. B. Hyman.



*"To whom all present shall come, Greeting:*

Now, therefore, be it known that I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, in consideration of the promises, divers other good and sufficient reasons, me thereunto moving, do hereby grant to the said Elisha Cornwell a full pardon and amnesty for all offenses by him committed, arising from participation, direct or implied, in the said rebellion, conditioned as follows: This pardon to begin and take effect if the said Elisha Cornwell shall take the oath prescribed in the proclamation of the President, dated May 29, 1865, and to be void and of no effect if said Elisha Cornwell shall hereafter at any time acquire any property whatever in slaves or make use of slave labor, and that he shall pay all costs which may have accrued in any proceedings hitherto instituted against his personal property."

In addition Mr. Cornwell had to write the Secretary of State of his acceptance to the stipulated conditions. The Secretary in return wrote the substantiation to President Johnson's reprieve and signified the original was on file.

The conservative State convention for this year provided for State or general organization and county organizations. Each county, by popular meeting or through the medium of existing organizations, appointed a county committee of two persons or captains. The purpose of which was to take charge of all matters in registration, organize local divisions, to make monthly reports to the chairman of the district committee and to keep the State convention informed of all local matters. Edgecombe county enrolled all registered voters who were willing to vote with the convention, and assisted all who would vote to register. The convention had elected the late George Howard, J. J. Davis, M. W. Ransom as members of the State Executive Committee.

In the meantime the *Tarboro Southerner*, a paper ever loyal to Edgecombe and the South, proposed a meeting of the representatives of the press to meet at Raleigh on June 18, 1868, to form plans to pursue in the campaign of the ensuing year.

Prior to this General Canby had issued an order on May 23, 1868, declaring the Constitution ratified and the radical candidates for State officers elected. Napoleon B. Belamy, Republican, was sent to the Senate; George Peck, a northerner, and Henry C. Cherry, negro, to the House of Representatives, and Joseph J.

Martin was elected solicitor for the Second Judicial District. Henry Cherry was a commissioner of the county for several years, and has the distinction of being the only man, white or colored, who had two daughters married to Congressmen.<sup>1</sup> Cherry was a good citizen and an excellent carpenter.

James Cromwell, a worthy colored man, deserves mention for his honesty. He received a unanimous nomination for the constitutional convention, but declined. While he appreciated the honor, he doubted his ability to serve the people in a proper manner, and begged that an abler delegate be elected. There were very few of his race possessed of his candor and earnestness.

Edgewcombe polled in April of this year 2,344 votes for the Constitution and 1,158 against it. The number of registered whites was 1,246, of blacks 2,622. The number of votes cast for Thomas S. Ashe for Governor was 1,158, and for Holden 2,337. By a comparison of the votes for the Constitution and Thomas S. Ashe the unity of the conservatives is observable. The number of votes each time was 1958.

The county ticket of 1868 is here given to show who were contending for the county government in that fateful year.

#### Senate

##### *Conservatives*

Honorable George Howard

##### *Radicals*

N. B. Bellamy

#### House of Representatives

Dossey Battle

G. P. Peck (northerner)

William S. Battle

H. C. Cherry (negro)

#### Sheriff

Benjamin T. Hart

Battle Bryan

#### Superior Court Clerk

L. D. Pender

John Norfleet

#### Register

Joseph Cobb

B. J. Keech

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<sup>1</sup> George White and H. P. Cheatam.

## Treasurer

R. W. Whitehurst	No candidate
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## County Surveyor

W. G. Lewis	No candidate
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## Commissioners

H. T. Clark	Robert Norfleet
William F. Lewis	W. K. Knight
L. R. Cherry	Benjamin Norfleet
K. Thigpen	D. Johnson (negro)
James F. Jenkins	T. Newton

Extensive plans had been made for a canvass of the county, led by Judge Howard, Fred Philips, and other able men. A mass meeting and barbecue was held October 24, 1868, and many notables were in attendance, among whom were Colonel R. H. Cowan, Honorable J. R. Stubbs, General M. W. Ransom, Colonels W. A. Jenkins and J. W. Hinton, of Norfolk, Virginia, Colonel E. C. Yellowley, Major John Hughes, Captain J. J. Davis, Colonel Thomas S. Kenan, and other influential citizens of the State. The radicals also had the pleasure of a visitor from Ohio, Colonel Davy Heaton, and Judge Rodman, of Beaufort. The local paper states that more than 10,000 people were present.

The result was an enlightenment to many of the negroes, which later resulted in much good for the county. The lamented Thomas S. Kenan, the conservative candidate for Congress in the Second District, spent many efforts and labored much in the county for the conservative cause, having as his slogan, "Shall negroes or white men rule North Carolina?"

The Republicans had a considerable number of negro soldiers who committed many outrages in support of their ticket. Such negroes as John Jones, of Rocky Mount district, who had been convicted of theft and had been publicly whipped at the whipping post, was chosen by the white Republicans as inspector of the election.

At the end of 1868 the white people, with one accord, laid aside their indifference, and inspired the recovery of their political freedom; emerged from a state of long inactivity into which

northern domination had forced them; and again devoted their energy to vindicate and maintain the supremacy of the white race. The Freedman's Bureau was on its last legs and the Federal military was preparing to be withdrawn. Yet incompetent and unworthy men filled practically all offices in the State and county. It can truly be said that North Carolina was reconstructed upon orthodox radical principles. A few whites, with the aid of the negro, controlled political affairs. The town of Tarboro alone claimed any pretension to real clean rule. N. M. Lawrence was elected mayor, H. H. Shaw, M. Weddell, James H. Bowditch were commissioners. They were elected by "The Citizen Ticket," and they were of worth and standing.

The result of the election of 1870 was very quiet and without much undue demonstration. After the calm came the storm, which the *Tarboro Southerner* had the honor of raising. In fact, the election was hardly known to the public before *The Southerner*, followed by other State papers, began an agitation for the impeachment of Governor Holden. The issue of August 11, 1870, had an editorial as follows: "He is the vilest man that ever polluted public office and his enemies are now crying in trumpet tones against him. Impeach the traitor and apostate, and the renegade, and drive him into the infamous oblivion which is so justly his due." It was probably due to the anger against him that lead to the demoralization of the Republican party. Even many of his followers hated him with a political and personal rancor.

The Democratic conservatives of Edgecombe met at Tarboro in the county convention, June 15, 1870, and formed plans for the ensuing campaign.

An amusing incident occurred in election of 1870. Battle Bryan, the sheriff, gave notice that an election would be held on the 4th of August for the election of officers and omitted that of sheriff. He explained, however, that he had been advised that the election of sheriff for Edgecombe County could not be constitutionally held until the first Thursday in August, 1872. It appears that Mr. Bryan's lack of information subjected him to some heckling, and to produce a sentiment against the Republican position that once in office never out again. Alexander McCabe was elected, but allowed Mr. Bryan to remain in office.



Frequently in political campaigns, especially in the five years following 1865, personalities were indulged in by the canvassers. During this period the county was wild with excitement over issues raised by different parties. Charges without any purpose save political were accumulated to injure integrity and blacken the character of individuals. Then, as now, the character of many would not stand too much probing, and slight defects were sometimes exaggerated. The conflict between William Biggs, of Tarboro, and Judge Jones, of the Second Judicial District, was perhaps the greatest incident in Edgecombe. This resulted in Biggs losing his right to practice law in Edgecombe courts, and in the impeachment of Judge Jones.

The trouble started in the campaign of 1872, when William Biggs, editor of *Tarboro Southerner*, attended a radical meeting at Tarboro to represent his paper. While there he was attacked and insulted by a negro, prompted by white radicals. Mr. Biggs had a large cane and struck the negro across the head. This acted as a signal, and more than five hundred of the mob rushed upon him and a few Democrats present. The mob was held at bay by Alexander McCabe, while two colored men, J. T. Scott and Napoleon Patterson, who, knowing the purpose of the radicals, rescued Mr. Biggs, and got him away.

Mr. Biggs, a most loyal Democrat, had supported his party principles with an able pen, thereby incurring the fear and hatred of the radicals in the county. He was commonly suspected of being a member of the Ku Klux.

Following this William Biggs's actions proved offensive to Judge Jones, due to the appearance of articles in the *Tarboro Southerner* criticising him. Jones attempted to suppress the freedom of the *Southerner*, and the State papers took up the matter. In the meantime General Lewis had charged Judge Jones with having pronounced in open court a slander against the Williamson and Tarboro Railroad, of which General Lewis was general superintendent. It appeared that one of the directors of the road had been summoned as juror and upon his pleading exemption according to a clause of the charter of the company, exempting officers from military, public road and jury duty, Jones stated that the Williamson and Tarboro Railroad had forfeited its charter more than once, and that it was not in force. General

Lewis protested and Biggs supported him. Judge Jones then deprived Biggs of his right to practice in the court, and attempted to discipline the *Southerner*. Editor Biggs defended himself and exposed Jones's character. Jones had been placed on the bench as a result of the war; was incompetent in all respects. In spite of this fact he was aided by Mr. Rodman, of Beaufort, who made an attack on the *Southerner*; and which Governor Holden aided and abetted. Jones's actions while presiding in court were so suggestive of a jay bird, that he was known as Jaybird Jones.

The late editor of the *Southerner*, Frank Powell, retained a satire in verse against Jones, written by Biggs. It is worthy of copying:

"It is said by the vulgar, and thought to be so,  
That jaybirds on Friday to Hades do go.  
But it is quite likely they make a limited stay,  
And depart for the earth on the following day,  
But when their namesake Jones goes there to burn,  
For the joy of mankind, he 'll never return."

A bill for impeachment was finally brought against Jones in the Senate for immoral conduct with a negress in Tarboro, and for being indecent and drunk in Raleigh, Salisbury, and Charlotte. In 1872 he was impeached, and at the same time Biggs asked to be restored as attorney and had the privilege granted to him by the Supreme Court.

In the meantime the realization of their declining power began to dawn upon the minds of the negroes, and the fact that they were being worsted in securing political bargains troubled them to a considerable extent. The negro voters in the county found in one W. P. Mabson (colored) a fit representative. Mabson was reported as being a Methodist preacher of some ability. In order to understand the position assumed by the negroes and radicals about the time Mabson appeared, it will be necessary to refer to campaigns of 1871 and 1872.

There were two parties in the field—Democrats or conservatives, and Republicans or radicals. The Democrats of Edgecombe met in convention on Saturday, July 1, 1871, and nominated as their candidates for the State Convention H. T. Clark and William F. Lewis. The convention that nominated these gentlemen was reputed to be the largest and most harmonious ever

held in Edgecombe. Nearly every township was represented, and a wonderful spirit of unanimity prevailed throughout the entire proceedings.

These candidates, who promised a thorough and active canvass in the county, were supported by George Howard, John L. Bridgers, Fred Philips, C. M. Wesson, T. R. Owens, Jr., J. S. Barlow, H. L. Station, Jr., B. H. Bunn, and J. L. Bridgers, Jr., who were the county's best speakers at this time and who explained the importance of the issues at stake. An appeal published in the local paper gives an example of the Democratic sentiment:

"LET FRIDAY THE 13TH DAY OF JANUARY be set apart as a day of fasting and prayer, throughout our habitations. Let no strong drink or other luxuries be used for the three days preceding. Let the people assemble in their places of worship and cry mightily unto the Lord. Let the maidservants whose employment will not permit them to worship during the forenoon ask their employers to allow them the afternoon, that they may spend it in fasting and prayer on behalf of the government and our suffering people.

"Let the minister of the Gospel proclaim this fast and see that it is observed. If this call is heartily responded to, God will deliver us."

The occasion for this religious duty being the satirical opposition offered to the Republican ticket and nominees, which were as follows: George L. Mabson, Representative, from New Hanover County; Edward R. Dudley, Craven County; Robert Fletcher, Richmond County; Stewart Ellison, Wake County; R. Falkner, Warren County; W. H. Reavis, Granville County; Augustus Robbins, Bertie County; William D. Newson, Hertford County; B. H. Jones, Northampton County; Willis Bunn, Edgecombe County; John Bryant, Halifax County; W. W. Morgan, Wake County; Charles Smith, Halifax County; J. R. Page, Chowan County; and R. M. Johnson, Edgecombe County. The entire number were Republicans.

The Democratic campaign opened with the slogan: "Officeholder's ticket; no convention, increased taxation and ruin," as compared with the "people's ticket; convention; reduced taxation and restored prosperity." A county convention was called by the

chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee to meet Saturday, July 1, 1871, in order to nominate candidates for the State convention. The purpose of the State convention was to remove the political chaos then existing. For some unexplained reason the convention was voted down.

In the meantime conditions were becoming more favorable for the white citizens and the Democrats who had taken part in the war. A committee known as the "Southern Outrage Committee" was organized in Washington and considered means of redress for the multifarious deeds perpetrated on the whites in the Southern States. In February, 1871, William H. Battle and B. F. Moore were summoned to Washington to testify before this committee. This action and the sending of these two men proved a very favorable omen to the county, and a terrible ominous indication to northern politicians and the Republican party. The action by the committee indicated that at last some sincerity was shown in the search for a true condition in the county, while it proved to the political fortune hunters in North Carolina who had been gathering in Washington that their day was coming to a close. It indicated that the more thoughtful Republicans were heartily tired of the burdens they had been subjected to during the period of reconstruction.

Messrs. Battle and Moore were men well selected for the making a true and unbiased report of the condition of affairs in the county and State. They were given recognition at the committee hearing and much benefit was derived from their official representation.

In the year 1875 Republicans were still in control in State and county. W. P. Mabson and Alexander McCabe being the leading radicals. McCabe was in the Senate. It was at the beginning of this year that a promise of better things appeared on the horizon. The incompetency of Republican rule was too unjust and wasteful, and at the beginning of 1875 the county began its redemption. Under the rule of Republicans the town commissioners of Tarboro attempted to get the State Legislature to empower them to sell the Tarboro Common. The local pride of the people resented this act severely, and this issue was thrown into campaign against the Republicans more than once.



The county Democratic ticket for 1876, while not as able as the year 1870, was composed of rising citizens. John M. Perry for Senate; William T. Cobb and Dr. A. B. Nobles, House of Representatives; Spencer L. Hart, sheriff; William W. Parker, treasurer; R. G. Pittman, surveyor; Thomas W. Ider, coroner, and C. B. Killibrew, Hiram Webb, D. B. Butts, James K. Lawrence, and M. B. Pitt for commissioners. Tarboro organized a Tilden and Vance Club, with S. S. Nash as president; J. H. Brown, first vice-president, and S. F. Philips, chairman. More than 400 members joined this organization. At this time a falling away from the Republican banner was noticeable in the county. At the meeting held August 25, 1876, R. M. Johnson, a prominent negro Republican and ex-member of the Legislature, gave his application to the Tilden and Vance Club. His application is here quoted:

"I hereby tender my resignation to the Republican party, and ask that my name be enrolled in that of democracy. Having been a faithful member of the Republican party all my political life, it will be remembered in the campaign of 1874 I was one of the few Republicans in the county that asked for reform in my party which was not adhered to. Now I am fully of the opinion not only the county demands reform, but also the nation, and as one of the citizens of the Republic I hereby tender my weak and feeble ability to the standard bearers of reform, Samuel J. Tilden, Thomas A. Hendricks, and Zebulon B. Vance."

Harry Dancy, a very respectable colored man, was also a member of the Tilden and Vance Club at Battlesboro. He had always manifested a stand for the Democratic party, and was often threatened with death by the members of his own race.

The retirement of Republicans from their party and giving support to Democrats gave much pleasure to Democratic leaders. The gain, however, was partially offset, due to the fact that there were several political aspirants for office who ran on an independent ticket. This caused a split in the party and gave a radical gain. The *Tarboro Southerner*, in commenting on an independent candidate, said that such a candidate was a political trickster, who was ready to betray his political friends and deceive his political opponents, and one who did not hesitate to

sacrifice principles for promotion, and who while scheming for the support of the carpetbaggers had not the courage or the manliness to array himself under their banner.

The electioneering this year was unique, carried on by Vance and Leach in the State, and Howard, Philips, Perry, Bridgers, Cheshire, Baker, and Bourne in the county. That their efforts resulted in much good is seen from the returns in the election. Although W. P. Mabson, colored, went to the Senate, W. A. Duggan and Willis Bunn, colored, went to the House of Representatives, the county showed a large vote for Tilden and Vance.

William A. Duggan was a native of Edgecombe County, and had been magistrate, commissioner, and school examiner. He graduated at the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, 1861, served through war as assistant surgeon at Fort Fisher and the military hospital at Wilson. He was at Goldsboro and surrendered there and immediately became Republican in politics.

William Bunn, a negro farmer and Republican, a former slave, one-time magistrate, was elected to the Legislature 1870, 1872, and 1877 by a majority vote of 2,300.

William P. Mabson, senator, from Fifth District, was a negro of some ability, born November 1, 1846, in Wilmington, North Carolina, and well educated at Lincoln College, Chester County, Pennsylvania. His first election was to the House in 1872 and to the Senate in 1874. He was Republican delegate to the Constitutional Convention 1875, and elected in 1877 by 2,300 majority. He was by vocation a school teacher, and for years was county school examiner in Edgecombe, and his party leader.

The election was intensely exciting, and the result in the State of much consequence. The streets of Tarboro were thronged with citizens to hear the news. Farmers, it was reported, left their fields, merchants their business, to hear the latest results. The Republicans felt the results heavily and stayed away from the streets. The State ticket was elected in its entirety, giving a great Democratic victory, with the State redeemed and the white man once more given his political rights.

After the election of 1876 a movement for negro colonization was inaugurated, but soon came to grief. The movement, however, did not originate from the leading Democrats, but by some parties

who suffered political reverses in that year. Bunn from Edgecombe agitated the matter in the Legislature. The resolution, however, asking the Legislature to suggest some feasible plan upon which Congress could be memorialized to set apart some territories west of the Mississippi River for the use of colored people, was taken up as a special order and was considered.

Following the Democratic victory of 1876 civil affairs were better administered. In 1877 a bill to provide for an Inferior Court, called Court of Common Pleas, was enacted by the Legislature. Members of the board of county commissioners were ex officio judges and possessed all powers incident to that jurisdiction. Court was held four times in each year, and conducted by the Justices of the Peace. This court exercised exclusive jurisdiction of all special proceedings, and had concurrent jurisdiction with the Superior Court in all civil actions arising on torts in which damage claimed was not more than \$50.00, and concurrent jurisdiction with the courts of Justices of the Peace, wherein the sum demanded exceeded \$60.00. The court also had a limited jurisdiction to inquire of, try, hear, and determine certain crimes and misdemeanors.

In the election for this year Edgecombe elected forty-eight magistrates for fourteen townships and made considerable progress for democracy.

The campaign of 1876 had disclosed an attempt of strategy by the radical party to regain the lost ground in the previous election. Early in the time for registration it was discovered that the registration books were being copied from the old ones. The law was that none should register on election day. The duty of copying being in the hands of shrewd and unscrupulous radical leaders, many white names were omitted. To show that it was accidentally done, names of a few colored men were left out.

In addition to this the polls in Tarboro townships revealed the fact that a number of illegal votes were cast by negro boys under twenty years of age, all of whom registered a few days previous to the election. The registration books were in the keeping of J. H. M. Jackson, who gave no notice of the time or place of registering. The books were kept at his house, where white men did not frequent, but where the colored people had unlimited freedom. It was easy, therefore, to get these boys to register

without fear of detection. After having registered, the Democratic challengers were unable to prevent them from voting on account of the absence of any direct evidence to their ages. Also due to the fact that the registrar was at his house instead of the court house, the proper place, several whites failed to register and consequently could not vote. This was indeed a political trick, and although it aided the Republicans it was not sufficient to materially reduce the gain made by the Democrats. Rocky Mount gave a liberal Democratic majority and an increase over 1870. The net Democratic gain for the county was 1,071. The method employed by the radicals, caused an agitation for central government elections.

In the election of 1876 a very interesting article was published in the Tarboro paper as a colored man's view, signed by Joseph Weaver. In his article a suggestion was made that the Republican politicians of the county were after all the spoils and then leaving the negro to get what he could. The negro expressed, to a large extent, the actual conditions then existing.

Alexander McCabe and Joseph Cobb remained commissioners for the town. They continued in this office until in 1875, when the Legislature of North Carolina amended the charter of the town of Tarboro and provided a registrar and inspector for the election of commissioners. Messrs. McCabe and Cobb considered the act as unconstitutional, and asked to be excused from voting. John S. Dancy was a negro appointed on the committee to assess property for taxation. He had lived in Washington City; had a good education and spoke well. Frank Battle, a blatant politician, who had begun his political career in the seventies, was given an unpleasant reminder after his acts in the election of 1872. When Benjamin Hart was hung for a crime, Frank Battle, who had been warned because of his attempt to excite the members of his race, suddenly disappeared.

William Battle, negro, was appointed policeman in 1872, while Frank Redmond, also colored, served as policeman for two or three years. The chief of police of Tarboro for this period said that Redmond was better than anybody he had to work up matters. He stood well with the people.

Saturday, January 13, 1873, will stand as a rather remarkable day in the annals of Republican politics in Edgecombe County.



It was nothing unusual to see 3,000 colored votes influenced and controlled by a few aspiring whites. The method by which this was accomplished in 1873 is amusing. The scene was a Republican convention in Tarboro, and the actors were Mabson, negro, McCabe, Republican leader, and Joseph Cobb, white resident of the county. Mabson, a delegate, had been expelled from the convention and was making a desperate fight, with a show of considerable strength, when he was summarily set aside by order of McCabe, who appointed Joseph Cobb in his place. The tactics employed by both parties were characteristic of the time. In January, 1873, the Legislature voted to expel Mabson as representative from Edgecombe on account of his ineligibility by not being a qualified resident of the county.<sup>1</sup> The account is given from the *Tarboro Southerner*: "The first move was made by Mabson and came near being a success. Noticing the absence of the Cobb faction, he, in the capacity of chairman of the executive committee, called the convention to order, and had Willis Bunn, his devoted friend, put in the chair as permanent president. By the time Bunn had taken the chair and was explaining the object, etc., news of the danger reached the Cobb faction downstairs, which, headed by McCabe, rushed into the hall in the most excited state of alarm and confusion. They were nearly tripped by McCabe, who was equal to the occasion, and, at the crack of his whip, Bunn was ignominiously driven from the chair on the ground that he had been nominated by one who was not a 'diligent.'

"McCabe then immediately took charge of the vacated chair (though by what means deponent saith not), and issued his orders to his 'niggers' with all the majesty of the king of the Sandwich Islands.

"Numberless motions and counter motions were made, always ending in the defeat of Mabson, who, no doubt, thought it remarkably strange the chairman should so often forget to put his side of the question to the convention.

"After a scene of inextricable confusion, during which it was utterly impossible to say who was hallooing the loudest and making the most noise, McCabe managed to bring his unruly colored subjects to something like order, when he announced that the

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<sup>1</sup> Mabson had sworn falsely in order to vote in Beaufort in 1871. He could not have been both a citizen of Beaufort and Edgecombe.

'diligits' of the different townships (twelve of which were reported represented) would retire for the purpose of making the nomination.

"Fearful for the interests of his friend Cobb, he placed a colored gem'man in his seat and followed the retiring 'diligits' to the scene of consultation.

"After waiting some half hour they returned, headed by McCabe, holding in his hand the report. Mabson was defeated and had to retire.

"Mabson said he should heartily support Cobb and had no intention of bolting. The nominee then came forward and made his same old speech about 'not seeking office,' etc., which caused even a smile on the faces of his sable hearers."

The discussion in the committee room later disclosed considerable strength for Mabson, five townships being strongly in his favor. He did not have sufficient strength, however, to overcome the white influence.

After his rejection in 1873 and the succession of Joseph Cobb to the Legislature, Mabson tried to convince his colored constituents that he was persecuted by the Democratic members of the Legislature on account of his color. It appears that he failed to convince enough of them to get a nomination. This began Mabson's decline in politics. He had enjoyed a rich harvest. He had been negro superintendent of education in the county and also a member of the Senate. He fell out with his race about 1880 over one Benjamin Hart, a negro, when a mob was formed against the latter. Hart was carried at this time to Williamston by John Norfleet, clerk of the Inferior Court, for protection. In the meantime two men with pistols mounted a train for Williamston. The engineer, Perason, was told to run to Williamston. He refused, and was told to take his choice to "Williamston or hell," and he informed them he would go to Williamston. A line of guards were placed on the streets from the jail to the depot. The negro was retaken and brought back to Tarboro and hung. In the meantime Mabson claimed the protection of the guards for his attitude against the negro criminal. In 1882 Mabson experienced further trouble while in attendance at a convention in Wilson. While there he walked into a store on Tarboro street and with a pompous air called for a cigar, which he lit and strolled

away without paying for same. The clerk protested, and the proprietor issued a warrant and had Mabson arrested. The case was submitted and Mabson fined five cents and costs.

The Democratic party had no hopes of winning in 1873. They knew their only duty lay in putting out a ticket or else abandon the party. Consequently they ran candidates in every election and supported them as if in hope of victory. No canvass, however, was made this year by any of the party nominees.

The last important attempt of the radicals to gain the fast disappearing power was in 1880. The Republican convention met in Tarboro on the 2d of September. John C. Dancy (colored) was chairman of the executive committee, and called the convention to order. Dancy was considered a man of some intelligence, and had been elected mayor of the town of Tarboro. He was a negro of the old type and liked by many of the white people. He was kind and friendly. The committee on permanent organization reported him as permanent chairman and W. A. Duggan, white, as secretary. The delegates conferred and reported the following nominations: W. P. Williamson, white, for Senate; for the House, Clinton W. Battle and W. W. Watson, colored; sheriff, Battle Bryan, white; registrar of deeds, John C. Dancy, colored; treasurer, B. J. Keech, white; coroner, Clem S. Camper, colored.

A resolution was passed pledging the party to support the nominees. During the campaign of July, 1880, the "bloody shirt" was furiously waived at the Garfield and Arthur mass meeting held in the Tarboro Court House. The proceeding was led by J. C. Dancy as chairman. The Republicans in many respects were losing their ablest leaders. Sherwood Andrews, colored, who had been active in politics and an office holder, was a fugitive from justice, having been caught stealing bacon from Shaw and McCabe, merchants at Tarboro. Frank Battle had disappeared, while Mabson had lost his standing.

Radical officers were elected for the county. Hilliard Chapman was elected commissioner, while McCabe also came back as commissioner. McCabe was elected chief of police in May, 1881, at the same time he was elected commissioner to succeed himself, but later resigned to give full time to his police duties. He was later accused of being so intoxicated as to be incapable of discharging his duties as chief, and even appeared in this

state before the commissioners. He was suspended from office, and later, upon his appearance before the commissioners and pleading guilty, upon his request he was taken back. On September 21, 1881, Mayor Dancy preferred charges against him again for being in a continuous state of intoxication, and he was suspended indefinitely. This in a measure ended his political career. He was stricken down at the age of thirty-eight by that dreadful disease, consumption.

At the same time Whitted colonized the Second Ward for the Republican vote against the party that put him in as police, and attempted to turn out the ones that put him in office. He immediately had charges preferred against him by the mayor and subsequently lost his job for neglect of duty while dabbling in politics.

Among Edgecombe's numerous organizations in the eighties was a society known as the Knights of Labor. When Messrs. Keech and McCullen refused nomination McCullen issued a circular to the effect that he was a Knight of Labor candidate. The Knights of Labor were a nonpolitical body and ignored McCullen's letter announcing his candidacy. In addition McCullen hurt himself politically by attending the Democratic convention and running against a candidate whom he had nominated.

The time for election caused considerable excitement, especially in the Second Ward. Many who had attempted to register were questioned by Democratic poll holders, and it was learned that many admitted that Republicans paid their rent to induce them to move in the Second Ward. They were not allowed to register, to the consternation of R. S. Taylor, a Republican leader, and Frank Whitted. John F. Shackelford, poll holder, remained firm, and only allowed those qualified to register. Packing of the ballot was carried to the extreme, while farm hands working several miles from town—one aspirant worked seven miles—claimed the Second Ward as their residence.

In the Third Ward the Democrats did well, but could not overcome the Republican majority existing there at the time. On the whole the Republicans won a majority of officers in this election, especially in county offices.



## CHAPTER IX

### POLITICS 1880—1900

Beginning with the year 1880 politics in Edgecombe took on a new interest due to the fact that political parties were more equalized. Party rancor of reconstruction subsided, leaving a more or less open road for equal competition and the chance for the exercise of individual merit. Tarboro, the county seat of Edgecombe, had a population in 1880 of about 1,600 people, of whom at least fifty per cent were black, thus giving about an equal number in races, but a slight majority for the Republicans due to the fact that a few whites were still of this party.

The Republican majority in the county was offset, however, by the capture of the local court system by the Democrats. The struggle over the domination of the court began in 1877, as was intimated in the previous chapter. In the fall of 1877 the magistrates of the different townships met in Tarboro in Teel's Hall for the purpose of establishing or not establishing an Inferior Court. W. A. Knight called the meeting to order, and H. C. Bourne offered a resolution that the convention establish a court to be known as the Inferior Court of Edgecombe County, and that justices be elected to constitute said court.

Upon the motion of J. B. Cofield the pay of the associate justices was fixed at two dollars (\$2.00) per day and the presiding justice three dollars (\$3.00). After the proposition of Mr. Bourne relative to the appointment of tellers, John I. Lewis and Thomas L. Mayo, the following men were nominated for justice: H. C. Bourne, W. T. Cobb, J. J. Battle, and J. K. Lawrence. Bourne received 29 votes, Cobb 13, Battle 1, and J. K. Lawrence 1. Bourne was accordingly declared justice.

Following the ballot for first justice, W. T. Cobb, Ed Sharpe, George Howard, W. A. Johnson, G. W. Hammond, and J. J. Battle were nominated for associate justice. The first ballot resulted in no election. The second ballot gave Cobb the majority and the election. The ballot for third justice resulted in the election of J. J. Battle. H. L. Station, then Superior Court Clerk, held the office of justice *ex officio* until his term as clerk expired.

In the meantime R. H. Gatlin moved to go into election of county solicitor and J. L. Bridgers, Jr., Frank Powell, and Dorsey Battle were put in nomination. Mr. Bridgers was the successful nominee and was declared elected. Following the adjournment, the justices met and elected H. C. Bourne as presiding justice. All these men were Democratic in politics, and constituted the first Democratic court since the reconstruction acts were passed.

In August of the following year time came to elect new justices, and W. H. Johnson was requested to serve, since a lawyer was needed on the bench. Considerable differences of opinion, however, grew out of this policy and caused a new split in the power gained by the Democratic party. The question was raised as to the expediency of placing a lawyer on the Inferior Court, and could a lawyer of any capacity fill the position at the salary paid. To increase the salary would of necessity defeat one object of the court, which was to reduce the expenses of the county. M. J. Battle took the stand that the people were satisfied with the court as it was in 1877, and that the matter should not be agitated. The *Tarboro Southerner*, on the other hand, contended that the more expert the workman the higher the wages, but in the end the work was better and hence cheaper. Mr. Johnson was beyond question a man of great ability, and had attained at the State University many high honors. At the time he was the logical man for the position. Mr. Johnson was elected to succeed Mr. Cobb, but at the meeting of the court in January, 1880, Mr. Johnson had not qualified. He at first refused election, claiming that it would lower him in the judiciary, as Mr. Bourne would be his superior. Mr. Bourne and Mr. Battle would not resign, and later, a compromise being effected, Mr. Johnson accepted.

In the meantime the court had reorganized and Justices Battle and Bourne were on the bench. Both appeared to take the position as presiding justice. The law required a chairman, and one could not be elected without one voting for himself. This naturally was not done. Widespread dissatisfaction prevailed among the magistrates who elected Mr. Johnson, for they desired that he might be chairman. When this failed, Mr. Johnson refused to serve, after having written a charge to the grand jury and refusing several cases in the court. Mr. Johnson deserves credit,

however, in that he was the only lawyer in the State elected to that position who did not ask for more pay. Court was held in January with Mr. Powell clerk, Mr. Bridgers solicitor, and two justices, who did just as well as if three justices were on the bench, for they disposed of a large amount of business.

In August, 1878, the justices selected five commissioners, who were to administer the county government for two years, beginning December 1, 1880. The men selected were well chosen as to qualification, and representative men of character and of intelligence.

In passing from Republican to Democratic rule considerable propaganda was used, both in and out of the county. The more intelligent negroes believed that the native whites were not hostile toward them so long as the negroes remained in their proper sphere. Edgecombe also had a few negroes who were loyal to her white people and made sacrifices for the interest of the common cause. W. H. Wytt, residing in Brooklyn, N. Y., gave an interesting account of the address of Harvey Dancy, a negro, in a Methodist Church in that city upon the subject of "The New South from the Negro Standpoint." In his talk Dancy, who hailed from Edgecombe, said much good of the South and his native county. He spoke with appreciation of the colored school in the county which the white people provided for the colored people.

Prior to the campaign of 1880, resulting in the election of Frank D. Dancy to the Senate, and C. W. Battle and D. Wimberly to the House of Representatives, there was considerable talk of nominating W. S. Battle, of Edgecombe, for Governor. Mr. Battle, in addition to being a prominent planter, business man, and politician, had taken considerable part in the deliberations over secession and reconstruction.

The election following 1880 gave W. P. Williamson a seat in the Senate and C. W. Battle was returned to the House of Representatives, while W. W. Watson succeeded Wimberly in the latter's office. The county was governed by a Democratic board of commissioners, while the Republicans exercised a somewhat full rule over town affairs.

The election of 1882, however, was full of unusual interest. Opposed to the regular Democratic party were the Republican

and Liberal parties, the latter consisting of so called Independent Democrats who had become dissatisfied with their party and coalesced with Republicans to defeat it. The county government bill and the prohibition bill, which were passed by the Democratic Legislature, were the points against which the coalition directed its attacks. It will be recalled that prohibition in 1881 was defeated in the State, Edgecombe County giving a large majority against it. The combination was therefore aimed at the State Legislature and not local matters. This fact was shown by the election of John R. Staton, a strong Democrat, as sheriff of the county in 1882.

The racial question never was so intense in the days of 1869 and 1870 as it was in 1882. Negro and white men walked arm in arm upon the streets of Tarboro. Moreover, a deep agitation was moving the negroes with increased vigor. The reawakening grew out of the law providing for the county magistrates to be elected by the Legislature, and to allow the county commissioners to levy the county taxes and to rule county affairs after they had been elected by the magistrates. The change from electing the commissioners by the people, as was the case under the reconstruction regime, was shown in providing Inferior Courts. The reason for the change was the fact that the negro, without property or education, controlled the elections and had piled up much debt, which threatened to bankrupt the county. The western counties, although free from the negro menace, joined the east and passed the county system as a financial policy.

The result is easily seen when one considers the political nature of the act. The Legislature of the State was beginning to have a Democratic majority. The Legislature would naturally elect Democratic magistrates, who, in turn, would elect Democratic commissioners. The Republicans and Liberals, therefore, charged that the obnoxious law deprived the people of the right of local self-government. This was exactly what was intended by the Democrats, who had struggled for over a decade to take local self-government away from the Republican party, which controlled the majority.

In 1882 the Democrats gained an advantage when Frederick Philips was nominated by the judicial convention in Weldon on June 22, 1882, for judge of the Superior Court of the Second







JUDGE FREDERICK PHILIPS

Judicial District. He received the hearty support of both parties. His training qualified him for the position, having been engrossing clerk of the Legislature of 1865, master of equity of Edgecombe County in 1866, and later prosecuting attorney for Nash County. He had also been mayor of Tarboro two terms beginning with 1875. Judge Philips was of a strong and courageous character, and presided with great efficiency while upon the bench.

In 1884 the intensity of politics had subsided much, as compared with the previous elections. This year Donnell Gilliam made his appearance in politics, a young lawyer of fine ability. It was unfortunate that he died in his prime. He received a liberal education and was well adapted for the career he selected. His oratorical ability was of a high order. In 1884 Mr. Gilliam was chosen presidential elector for the Second District. In the campaign for this year he became one of the principal speakers and many felt the weight of his ability.

Two negroes, B. S. Taylor to the Senate, and B. W. Thorpe, were elected to the House of Representatives, and N. D. Bellamy, Republican, to the House of Representatives. In 1886 the number of voters in the county was more than forty per cent in favor of the negroes; the whites having 1,278 and the colored 2,303. The following year a considerable increase was noticeable, the whites having 1,304 and the colored 2,523. The results of the election of this year showed a Republican majority for legislative offices again, with R. S. Taylor (negro) succeeding himself and C. C. Crenshaw and D. Wimberly going to the House of Representatives. C. M. Cook was elected sheriff of the county in 1886, and remained in office until November at which time Joseph Cobb filled the unexpired term. H. C. Bourne, a Democrat, succeeded to the office in July, 1887, and occupied the position until 1888, when Joseph Cobb was reelected.

Early in the year 1887, however, there was a noticeable decline of the Republicans in the county and a faint sign of the rise of new parties. In the Third Ward of the town of Tarboro, which had been Republican since the year 1866, the Democrats had a fighting chance. The trial vote showed that the Republican majority, with a full vote, would not exceed a dozen. In the Second Ward B. J. Keech and L. McCullen were candidates at the beginning. A caucus was held April 2, 1887, in the old

laundry building in Tarboro by some of the Republicans of the Second Ward. Keech and McCullen were present and also Charles Duggen, the leader. Keech and McCullen opposed any nomination, but signified their willingness to run as independent candidates. They refused to state why they wanted no nomination, but intimated that the people could guess the reason. In its guess the *Tarboro Southerner* suggested it was because Keech and McCullen were either ashamed of Charles Duggen as party associate, or else by running as independent candidates they hope to get some Democratic votes.

In the meantime Frank Whitted, negro policeman, who had been given a job under the Democratic rule, and Charles Duggen, a liquor dispenser in Tarboro, had organized and overcome the Republican fears, while in the First Ward the Democrats had no opposition. Below is the ticket by wards, showing the number of votes and the candidates elected:

## FIRST WARD

William E. Fountain, Democrat.....	42
George Howard, Democrat.....	42
Benjamin Norfleet, Republican.....	2
Wiley Howard, Republican.....	2

## SECOND WARD

Donnell Gilliam, Democrat.....	56
Charles G. Bradley, Democrat.....	60
B. J. Keech, Republican.....	31
L. M. McCullen, Republican.....	27

## THIRD WARD

W. H. Knight, Democrat.....	65
Olando Burnett, Democrat.....	60
W. H. Foreman, Republican.....	86
R. S. Taylor, Republican.....	86

At the same time W. E. Fountain was elected mayor. He was a Democrat and was destined to become involved in Edgecombe politics.

During the year 1889 the town charter was amended and the electing power was placed in the hands of the county commissioners, giving them the power of ruling the Republicans out of office in local affairs. It is observed that almost each year disclosed the



fact that Democratic legislation curtailed the right of the Republicans to rule. It was the only method of offsetting the great majority exercised by the Republican party in the county. During the year 1889 not a single negro appeared in the list of magistrates, while W. E. Fountain, Democratic mayor of Tarboro, was reëlected. D. Wimberly was elected to the Senate and Edward Bridgers and R. H. Daniels, all Democrats, to the House of Representatives. The Republicans, however, succeeded in putting George H. White (negro), resident of Tarboro, in as solicitor for the Second Judicial District in 1888. White was a man of great native ability, and had the reputation of being impartial in his prosecutions. He had practiced law in Washington City, and also had considerable experience in law in other cities. His greatest weakness was his desire for social equality, which eventually resulted in his rejection by not only the white people of the county, but also by his race. White, a few years later, received his first rejection at the hands of his race. Several years ago John Robinson's Circus made its annual appearance in the county and exhibited at Tarboro. About the year 1900 White was a member of the audience to watch the exhibition and sat down with the white people. The circus officials asked him to move over to the colored side. White refused, and policemen were called to put him out upon his declaring that he would not sit with the members of his race. This caused an alienation on the part of the negroes, who claimed White could not go with white people and that he thought himself too good to go with negroes.

The election of 1890 was the beginning of a change in political movements and caused considerable excitement and upheaval. A cleavage developed in party lines, and the Republican party, realizing itself worsted by a Democratic Legislature, began to look around for an alliance to strengthen its ranks. There began also a great negro exodus under the efforts of negro labor agents, among whom was George P. Mabson, which had weakened the party. Great dissatisfaction prevailed among the negroes generally. The movement began early in the year 1889. A convention met in Raleigh April 25th, and after discussing the conditions of the negro, advised an emigration. The dominating principle of the whites in supporting the movement was that political conditions would be improved by the riddance of the negro. It was

undeniable that the white people were persecuting him by discriminating legislation as a result of the political revolution. Moreover, the farmers had organized due to the surplus of negro labor, and the alliance pushed oppression against the negroes everywhere. The election law was also referred to later as being a direct blow at the negro, since it was necessary for him to read and write before he could vote. In 1890 the population had decreased from 26,181 in 1880 to 24,173, making a decrease of 2,068 in ten years. The division of the races was as follows: In 1880 there were 7,968 whites as compared with 8,478 in 1890, while the negro population in 1880 was 18,213, as compared with 15,634 in 1890.

The year 1890 proved to be of such alarming nature that the decree issued by the Democratic party to rid the county of the negro was revoked, and severe measures were imposed on recruiting agents working in the State. Each agent by law was compelled to secure a license at the cost of \$1,000.00 before recruiting in any county. This practically marked a prohibition on their business. The county lost over 3,500 negroes in less than eighteen months, making a telling offset upon Republicanism in this county.

The Democrats had a substantial ticket for the pending election, consisting of R. H. Speight for Senate, J. T. Howard and Jesse Brake, House of Representatives, William Knight for sheriff, and Dr. W. J. Lawrence as coroner. At a meeting of the Central Democratic Executive Committee in the summer of 1890, Mr. Howard, however, tendered his resignation for the Legislature, and also Dr. Lawrence his resignation as coroner. W. A. Bridgers, of Township No. 11, was chosen to succeed Mr. Howard, and Dr. H. T. Bass, Dr. Lawrence. The selection was very timely and very beneficial. Mr. Bridgers, besides being a good scholar, was in touch with the people and exercised a good influence in the county. He was also equipped for a lawmaker.

With the exception of Mr. Knight, who was then occupying the position of sheriff, none of the Democratic candidates were opposed in the Democratic convention. The Republicans, on the other hand, were considerably weakened by the existence of two factions in the party. B. J. Keech led one faction and Joseph Cobb the other. Both of the men wanted the office of register of deeds. Battle Bryan was running for sheriff. The only member

of the party who could give bond was Joseph Cobb, and he was unfit for service on account of his age. In order, however, to harmonize party issues Mr. Cobb consenting to become a candidate, but before the time for election withdrew. In making the compromise the nomination for register of deeds was awarded to Elbert Bryan.

The Republicans were called in meeting in the summer of 1890, acting through Battle Bryan, who seemed to be the one most interested. The local paper puts the meeting as a tame affair, which was not characteristic of the party. About noon Mr. Bryan went into the courthouse and rang the courthouse bell for the Republicans to assemble. About half a dozen were in attendance at the time and Mr. Bryan remained until the afternoon. While he was ringing the bell a crowd assembled in opposition and stationed themselves opposite the courthouse to heckle him. About three o'clock the bell was rung again and Mr. Bryan, with about fifteen of the Republican party, proceeded with the meeting. In Mr. Bryan's speech he showed the necessity of having Republicans on the ticket, and denounced the action of the previous convention for endorsing Democratic nominees for sheriff and treasurer.

Frank Dancy was appointed chairman of the meeting, who made a speech and introduced Frank Battle, who made a speech expressing disappointment in the legislative ticket. The meeting was eventually interrupted by Stephen Clark, who was opposed to the wrangling of the partisan members. In spite of the agitators, the meeting closed by endorsing the old ticket.

The results of the election gave the Democrats a big majority in State, county, and town. R. H. Speight was elected to the Senate, W. A. Bridgers and Jesse Brake to the House of Representatives. When Mr. Brake's landlady's daughter, of Raleigh, asked him how he was elected from so great a Republican County as Edgecombe, he replied, "I have enough children to elect me."

Mr. Knight was elected sheriff to succeed himself, while the town election resulted in two Democratic and one Republican commissioner. Don Gilliam for the First Ward, B. F. Spragins Second Ward, and J. W. Gant (Republican) for the Third Ward, by a majority of one vote. This occurred on account of the fact that D. L. Williams, Republican, refused to allow W. R. Moore

to vote. Mr. Moore voted in the Third Ward in 1888 and 1889, and swore he had not changed his residence. The fact, however, that he went away to marry a woman in Wilson and because his wife, who had relatives there, remained for some weeks, Mr. Williams and the Republican poll holders decided he was not a citizen. W. S. Clark succeeded W. E. Fountain as mayor, receiving a majority of votes at the first meeting of the town commissioners.

The facts in the election revealed a disgruntled element, especially in the ranks of the Republicans, while the Democrats did not possess any too much solidarity. Elbert Bryan, who was beaten for the nomination for register of deeds by Geoffrey Hyman, was dissatisfied and insisted upon a new ticket or a remodeling of the old one. Joe Pope Stewart, a man of northern designs and candidate for clerk of the Superior Court, labored under one disadvantage—the fact that he was not known in the county. The negroes were constantly asking, “Who was Stewart?” In addition the county negro was not favorably impressed with George L. Lloyd. His Republican leaders estimated he would not get ten votes in his own township. Moses Clare and Ed Bridgers had charges of licentiousness against them and this alienated the colored people.

During this election West Tarboro exercised its right of self-government. Captain Haywood Clark called a meeting of the citizens of this section to nominate commissioners for the first time. In the nomination for mayor Captain Clark was suggested and subsequently elected.

In the meantime the Second Judicial District was under an agitation preliminary to electing a judge, Judge Philips’s term having expired. John L. Bridgers, presiding justice of the Inferior Court in 1890, was suggested to run against Judge Philips. Mr. Bridgers had become very popular because of his favorable stand and support for public education. This constituted a great factor in winning for him popular approval. Mr. Bridgers expressed his sentiment by issuing a letter of refusal, thereby preserving the solidarity of feeling in the party and not jeopardizing the strength of the county in causing a split of votes by having two candidates.

The election of 1890 resulted in the greatest reverse the Republican party had ever encountered. This was true to such an



extent they did not turn out in 1891. Even the strongly contested Third Ward in the town of Tarboro went through the campaign and election without opposition. The Democrats, although victorious, were to witness a change of tactics the following year, due to the appearance of a third party.

In order to understand the movement, it will be necessary to go back a few years when the organization began. About 1867 the "Grange" movement was started in Washington by a number of the Government clerks who became interested in improving the conditions of the farmers in the South and West. It was a secret society, and both sexes could become members. About 1868 the first society was established in Edgecombe, and in common with other granges, was nonpolitical. Upon the agitation, however, of government regulation of railroads, the grangers in the West and endorsed by the Grange was declared unconstitutional by the began to participate in the movement. One of the laws advocated courts, and this caused the farmers to get in politics. The coalition of the Granges resulted in the "Farmer's Alliance." The independent parties which had appeared in the early seventies again appeared in political life under different names. The farmers in the county were censured for entering into politics through the "Alliance," which had been declared a nonpolitical organization. A reply was made in the *Tarboro Southerner* in which it was declared that since the Democratic party had not done anything for the farmers it was high time the farmer entered politics and did something for himself. In addition to that the "free silver" movement was at its acme in 1892, and free silver was supposed to be of benefit to the agricultural class, thus meeting the approval of at least seventy-five per cent of the population of Edgecombe County.

In 1889 Edgecombe had about fifteen local Alliances, one designated as Edgecombe, with Ellias Carr, president, and J. C. Powell, secretary. Another was Sparta, No. 218, with Ellias Carr, president, and J. A. Davis, secretary. Maple Swamp Alliance, No. 483, met at Whitakers, with W. T. Mayo, president, and J. S. Dixon, secretary. There was also another at Whitakers, No. 583, with J. M. Cutchin, president, and J. C. Bellamy, secretary. Dr. A. B. Nobles was president and T. P. Wynn, secretary, of Cocoa Alliance, No. 553. Otter's Creek, No. 732, had

a strong organization with H. H. Whitaker, president, and W. T. Dunford, secretary. Joseph Cobb was president and George Suggs, secretary, of Farm Creek Alliance, No. 763; W. C. Bradley, president, and Miss Lulu Leggett, secretary of Excelsior, No. 790; Dr. W. T. Bass, president, and F. B. Lloyd, secretary, of Tarboro, No. 918; W. J. Davenport, president, and E. T. Speed, secretary, of Hickory Fort, No. 933, which met at Coakley; A. J. Williams, president, and W. H. Worsley, secretary, of Juneville, No. 1080; E. C. Knight, president, and J. R. Harris, secretary, Mildred, No. 1084; and J. J. Battle, president, and George C. Battle, secretary, of Battleboro Alliance. This is only a partial list of Alliances, which were increasing each year. There was hardly an interval of five miles in the county east, west, north, or south that did not have an organization.

The election of 1892 was the first time that the local Alliance participated in politics. Its support was beyond a doubt the cause of the successful candidacy of Ellias Carr, of Edgecombe County. He had been an active member, and succeeded in creating a deep interest in the Farmer's Clubs not only in the county, but also in the State. Both parties had representatives in the Alliance and prior to 1892 there had been no fusion of parties, while the Alliance was inclined more to the Democratic element than the third party in 1892.

The first Democratic convention was called March 12, 1892, at the courthouse in Tarboro. John L. Bridgers called the convention to order in an appropriate speech, and Dr. R. H. Speight, chairman, was made permanent chairman in opposition to Dr. W. T. Mayo. Dr. W. P. Mercer was made secretary. The county candidates were nominated by acclamation and were as follows: W. T. Knight, sheriff; S. S. Nash, treasurer; J. J. Pittman, register of deeds; Dr. Don Williams, Sr., coroner; and Thomas F. Cherry, surveyor, the first three then filling the office for which they were nominated.

The legislative nominations were numerous, consisting of Dr. R. H. Speight, declined; Jesse Brake, Paul Jones, V. B. Sharpe, Don Gilliam, Dr. W. P. Mercer, and James B. Lloyd. After the second ballot, Dr. Mercer was unanimously nominated for Senate, and Jesse Brake unanimously nominated for the House of Repre-

sentatives. Mr. Sharpe also received unanimous nomination for the House against his protest, and W. L. Barlow was then nominated in his stead without dissent.

The committee on platform and resolution reported the following:

"The Democratic party of Edgecombe County reaffirms its endorsements of the principles of the Democratic party, state and National, as the only party that offers agricultural relief.

"That we deplore the retention in power of the Republican party, under whose domination laws so oppressive to the agricultural interests have been placed upon the statute books.

"That we oppose and will strenuously fight against the control and influence of those cormorants who go under the name of syndicates and monopolies composed of the money classes of the country, who have thus combined against the large masses and whose influence has been heretofore kept up by barefaced fraud and bribery.

"We are opposed to the Federal tax on State bank circulation.

"We favor lowering of taxes to revenue basis only, also a graduated income tax, in short a taxation which bears upon all alike.

"We favor abolition of the national banking system and a substitution of one that will take the control of money out of the hands of the few individuals; we favor a currency that will contract and expand so as to fit the annual products of the country, thereby furnishing a true and just measure of their value.

"We regard a public office, as not private property, but a public trust, and we promise our Democratic brethren everywhere that we will use our best effort to put men in the office who will guard well and faithfully the affairs of the country, State, and county.

"We favor a national system of finances based upon the wealth of the country, and not the public indebtedness, that will secure a sufficient currency to meet the requirements of the people, and we favor any constitutional means which will accomplish this purpose."

The delegation to the State convention was instructed to use all honorable means to send delegates to the Chicago convention to advocate the principles laid down and adopted in the county convention.

In the meantime, Elias Carr, at the solicitation of John L. Bridgers and others, had written his letter of acceptance for the nomination for Governor of North Carolina. The Democracy of Edgecombe, therefore, while assuring that the Democrats of the other counties of its firm adherence to the fundamental principles of the party, both National and State, recommended with one

accord Elias Carr to the voters of the State as the most available man to be on the State ticket. The convention was spiced with humor and harmonious feeling. Mr. Brake, the jolly man that he was, when the Carr committee had reported favorable, said Edgecombe had a first-class Carr, no railroad commission was necessary to fix rates, and he insisted upon laying it upon the track. S. S. Nash, in his usual characteristic manner, wanted to know if it had brakes on it.

In the meantime, on May 18th, a Democratic State convention met in Raleigh, and on the sixth ballot nominated Elias Carr for Governor over three competitors: Lieutenant Governor Holt, George W. Sanderlin, and Julian S. Carr.

Immediately after the Democratic convention Cleveland and Carr clubs were organized throughout the county. On April 7, 1892, the Farmer's Alliance made a public endorsement of Carr for Governor, and began a strong support for him.

In the meantime the Republicans were rallying around their banner and called a county convention for the purpose of nominating candidates. John Lloyd was secretary and made an effort to maintain a solid rank out of the diminishing members of the party. George H. White, negro solicitor for the Second Judicial District, made the opening speech at the convention, which was called to order by Wright Harrison. White drew the color line, but put the blame upon the Democrats for party partisanship, and charged them with monopolizing politics in the county and State. After several speeches nominations were made as follows: Owen James (colored), register of deeds; C. B. Keech, clerk of Superior Court; Lee Person (colored), Senate; Preston Baskerville (colored), House of Representatives. Only one white man was nominated for the ticket.

On November 3, 1892, the Republicans met again to nominate a treasurer, which had been omitted in the meeting of the first convention. At this meeting an affiliation with the third party came up. B. J. Keech had not registered and after being nominated for treasurer refused to run. The party began to look for a man to run. The Third Party in the meantime had failed to secure a candidate for sheriff, and had endorsed the Republican nominee, W. G. W. Leigh, and had proposed to the Republicans that they to endorse their candidate, A. B. Nobles, for treasurer.



The Republicans, however, met to select a treasurer. It was offered to Ex-Sheriff Joseph Cobb, who declined. The suggestion of the Third Party reciprocity idea was considered, but a majority of the committee failed to vote for him. After this the name of Benjamin Norfleet was suggested, but no action was taken.

Campaign issues were determined and preparations were made for organizations to promote the party principles. George H. White took an active part and received assistance from local members of his party.

The Third Party preliminaries were held June 2, 1892, in the various townships. No. 6 Township held their meeting in Braswell Hall, Whitakers, N. C. J. S. Dixon was made permanent chairman and L. L. Lyon secretary; J. S. Dixon, L. L. Lyon, J. M. Cutchin, Bisco Pittman, M. J. Battle, and E. W. Land were chosen delegates to the convention to be held in Tarboro, June 11, 1892. Maple Swamp sent W. L. Mayo, Patrick Lane, Theodore Fountain, J. B. Carr, and J. W. Johnson as delegates to the Tarboro convention.

The meeting in Tarboro on June 11th was more or less considered humorously. One purpose of the convention was to elect an executive committee and to appoint delegates to a convention to be held in Rocky Mount. W. H. Powell was made permanent chairman of the convention, and became an active worker in the party. The executive committee were: M. J. Battle, W. H. Worsley, David Braswell, W. J. Lawrence, and J. T. Dupree. The delegates were: L. S. Pender, T. B. Floyd, C. E. Flowers, A. L. Manning, F. L. Savage, W. L. Edwards, W. J. Lawrence, W. T. Mayo, R. S. Weeks, J. M. Cutchin, L. L. Lyon, W. D. Stokes, J. R. Stewart, W. L. Stallings, Thomas Best, N. B. Killebrew, D. T. Britt, David Braswell, A. J. Williams, E. H. Flowers, and J. T. Killebrew. This convention endorsed the St. Louis platform without a dissenting vote, and was subsequently adopted by the People's Party.

Toward the middle of the summer the Third Party began to lean toward the Republican party, and the conditions indicated a warm campaign. August, 1892, the Third Party annex of the Republicans had a conference, composed of M. J. Battle, A. B. Nobles, and J. M. Cuthin. A caucus was held in one of the committee rooms in the courthouse, where the party determined to put

out a full ticket and make divisions with the "Knights of Labor."<sup>1</sup> The "Knights of Labor" held a caucus and agreed to the coalition. Mr. Battle called the convention to order and explained the purpose of the caucus and called for nominations for chairman. W. L. Edwards was chosen and L. L. Lyons elected secretary. During the proceedings townships Nos. 2, 7, 9, 10, and 13 were without representation, while no township primaries had been held in townships Nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14. Many volunteers represented these townships.

The position now assumed by the Third Party showed its attitude as to the political issues and parties for the first time. J. M. Cutchin addressed the convention and abused all parties and the Democrats in particular. Grover Cleveland was abused, while Harrison was without comment. Almost every public character was aired in the address. Congress was accused of spending a billion dollars in six months; Jefferson was quoted as being against national banks, and the Democratic party was accused of defeating the silver bill and injuring the farmer.

The convention proceeded to elect delegates to a State convention. In the list of delegates the truth of a fusion with the Republican party was brought to light. The delegates were as follows: B. J. Keech, A. L. Manning, T. L. Winly, G. T. Dickens (colored), Nelson Barnes (colored), W. T. Mayo, L. L. Lyon, and W. D. Stokes.

The county ticket nomination was as follows: Register of deeds, B. J. Keech (white), and Levy Thigpen (colored); surveyor, L. S. Pender; Senate, J. M. Cutchin; House of Representatives, M. S. Williams (colored) and W. H. Worsley. The offices of treasurer and sheriff were omitted because suitable candidates were not available.

The ticket, although weak, promised to make a bad split in the voting and consequently made it less formidable for any one party. There were about forty in attendance and the proceedings of the convention caused several Democrats who were on the verge of bolting the party to return to Democracy. The "Knights of Labor" caucus was also feeble, having only about fourteen men,

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<sup>1</sup> The Knights of Labor was a local organization of farmers and labor in the county.

twelve colored and two white. The party, however, had one good supporter in a newspaper, the *Rattler*, of Whitakers, which advocated the party cause.

The "Farmer's Alliance," with a few isolated exceptions, constituted the Third Party, many of whom were allied with the Democratic party in the early spring, but by June were members in the Third Party convention.

Immediately after the organization of the Third Party differences of opinion began to develop between it and the Democrats. Especially were the issues relative to the two party platforms discussed. M. J. Battle, of the Third Party, took issue with Elias Carr, candidate for Governor, as to the similarity of the two party platforms. On the 5th of April, 1892, he wrote that in no particular did the St. Louis platform differ from the Ocala platform,<sup>1</sup> and asked if Elias Carr would repudiate his own handiwork. These two platforms were the essence of the relative party issues, and Mr. Carr had considerable to do with the forming of the Ocala platform of 1890. The Ocala platform of 1890 contended that the national legislature should be so framed in the future as not to build up one industry at the expense of the other. Secondly, it demanded a removal of the existing levy of tariff tax from the necessities of life. Third, the Ocala platform demanded a most rigid, honest, and just State and National Government, controlled and improvised means of public communication and transportation, and if this control did not eliminate the evils existing, the platform demanded the public ownership of these utilities.

The St. Louis platform, on the other hand, claimed that transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the Government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people. The telephone and telegraph, like the postoffice system, being a necessity for the conveyance of news should also be owned and operated by the Government.

The Ocala demands were later ingrafted into the State Democratic platform and became a vital issue at the convention held at Indianapolis. Mr. Carr was a member of the committee at Ocala that formulated the resolution and reported unanimously

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<sup>1</sup> Ocala platform was heartily supported by Carr as a delegate to convention held at Ocala, Florida.

upon these two planks. Mr. Carr, not seeing the authority or reason for eliminating these planks from the Alliance platform, expressed his opinion to the Alliance men. There were, however, abundant reasons for not endorsing the party which was at that time placing the Alliance in an inconsistent and false attitude by demanding ownerships after securing National and State control of railroads, while at the same time ignoring the tariff question, which was the most important issue of the day and in the greatest need of reform.

The Republican convention met in October, with Joseph Cobb and Joe Stewart and B. J. Keech. George Lloyd was made permanent chairman, and nominations were made as follows: George Lloyd, Senate; Moses Chase and Ed Bridgers for the House, Joseph Cobb for sheriff, Joe Stewart for clerk, after a compromise with B. J. Keech; Geoffrey Hyman for register of deeds, and S. S. Nash was endorsed for treasurer after the denial of Mr. Cobb's favorite, O. C. Farrar. The Republicans represented by Sam Lawrence rejected in reality the selection of the State officers, claiming that if they were not nominated the county candidates might use the money. "The poor class," said Lawrence, "wanted the county offices, for what good would the Legislature do them?" The fence law was upon the people, and such an order of the nomination was inconsistent.

During the latter part of May Mr. Carr, accompanied by Ex-Governor Jarvis and J. J. Laughinghouse, came to Tarboro and received his first big ovation. He was escorted to a big carriage, drawn by white horses, and received a shower of roses with a volume of shouts, "Hurrah for Elias Carr, the next Governor." The courthouse did not offer sufficient space, and Mr. Carr and his retinue occupied the balcony of the hotel, where the speeches were made. Ex-Governor Jarvis addressed the meeting and believed that Carr's nomination was the logical result of the political situation. He also received applause from the negro voters in his appeal to them, and who were more or less inclining toward Democratic tendencies.

Mr. Carr had, in the meantime, established his campaign headquarters in Raleigh and had a good organization perfected to carry out his program for the election.



By November the campaign had reached its height, with each party running well. On November 3d the Third Party, of Pitt County, including the candidates, were imported into Edgecombe at Conetoe for the purpose of influencing the election by canvassing. N. B. Dawson, Democrat, and residing in Conetoe, requested some time for his party. Philips, of the Pitt County delegation, and a candidate, announced his willingness to have a joint discussion. H. C. Bourne and Paul Jones, of Tarboro, being apprised of the fact, accordingly went to Conetoe for the joint debate. They met disappointment, however, for when they arrived they were coolly informed the meeting was a Third Party meeting, and they would not be given any division of time. Since there were no Democrats there and the meeting was composed entirely of Thirddites and colored people, the Democrat debaters declined to speak.

There remained only eight days before the election, and the struggle was indeed exciting. All the various clubs met in Tarboro for a good celebration at which time a torch light parade took place and speeches were made to 5,000 people. Dorsey Battle, of Rocky Mount, was one of the principal canvassers and a man of no little ability.

In the meantime, James B. Lloyd, who conducted the *Farmer's Advocate*,<sup>1</sup> although previously of Democratic principles, began to lean toward the Third Party. He had unpleasant contentions with Donnell Gilliam, chairman of the Democratic committee of the county. His open advocacy of the Third Party, however, after he had identified himself with the Democrats of the county and had gone to the Democratic primaries of Tarboro Township and sat in the Democratic convention, from which place he was sent to the State convention as a delegate and remained throughout the proceedings, subjected him to severe criticism for assailing the Democratic candidates and the principles of National Democracy.

Mr. Carr and all the Democratic candidates made a good canvass. The Republicans and the Thirddites, which were the weaker of the two, had also done everything imaginable to present a good showing. Never in the field of local politics had there been seen such ways devised to succeed. Party tricks were resorted to by

<sup>1</sup>Originally a newspaper organ conducted in the interest of the Farmer's Alliance and Agriculture.

all parties. In many of the precincts bogus electoral and State tickets were issued and voted for by the Republicans. On the electoral ticket the name of John H. Covington, from the Tenth Congressional District, appeared. On the State ticket Samuel P. Stevens, of Cleveland County, was running for commissioner of labor. There were not any such candidates affecting Edgecombe, and although they were numerous and unsuspectingly voted for, the ballots were void. This had the effect of a full vote not being polled, while the Democrats gained a great percentage when many of the Republicans repudiated their party over the attempt to trade votes. At some of the precincts the negroes even cheered Cleveland and marched to the polls and voted for him.

The Third Party did not succeed as expected by its leaders. The attempt, however, to excite race prejudices, while it added some votes to the Republicans, caused the negroes in Townships Nos. 2, 11, 13, and 14 to vote for the Third Party exclusively.

The first precinct heard from was No. 1 of Tarboro. Prior to this election this precinct had been close, but when the vote was counted by two Republicans, Nathan Williams and Jordan Dancy, it was found that No. 1 had returned a Democratic majority, and so did several other townships. A vote in detail is here given for the county:

<i>President</i>		<i>Congress</i>	
Cleveland .....	1,702	Woodard .....	1,894
Harrison .....	986	Cheatham .....	1,514
Weaver .....	613	Thorne .....	508

<i>Governor</i>		<i>Senate</i>	
Carr .....	1,760	Mercer .....	1,867
Furches .....	1,073	Garrett .....	1,564
Exum .....	580	Cutchen .....	471

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

<i>Democrats</i>		<i>Republicans</i>	
Brake .....	1,787	Bryant .....	1,568
Barlow .....	1,784	Williams .....	454
Harrison .....	1,579	Worsley .....	552





GOVERNOR ELIAS CARR



## COUNTY OFFICERS

*Sheriff*

Knight (D.) .....	2,200
Leigh (D.) .....	1,793

*Treasurer*

Nash (D.) .....	2,094
James .....	1,373
Nobles (3d P.) .....	484

*Register*

Pittman (D.) ..	2,083
Hyman (R.) ...	1,488
Keech (R.) ....	426

*Coroner*

Williams (R.) ..	1,965
Lloyd (3d P.) .	1,472
Thigpen (D.) .	432

*Surveyor*

Cherry (D.) ...	1,758
Howard .....	1,490
Pender .....	484

When the election returns were being made to the city hall at Tarboro, by wire, Governor Carr came to town and heard of his election. He was greeted with great enthusiasm and hearty handshakes.

Elias Carr was the son of Jonas Carr and Elizabeth (Hilliard) Carr. His father was of the farmer class and owned extensive lands, and a progressive farmer. Mr. Carr was educated under the tutelage of one of the State's noted educators, W. J. Bingham, of Oaks School. He completed his education at the Universities of North Carolina and Virginia. Although he was inexperienced in the administration of public affairs, he was a most practical man in his business dealings. While president of the State Alliance he showed his interest and ability in securing the passage of an act to increase the school tax for better education.

After the election of 1892 party coalition took place in the county. It became obvious that since the Democrats had the heavy majority with three parties in the race, that strength must be obtained to offset their power. The Republicans have always been charged with engineering the Populist movement, which began in 1892 with the Farmer's Alliance, and reached its culmination in 1894. The facts are, however, that at the beginning the party comprised both Democrats and Republicans who bolted their respective parties. The Third Party, after the election, began to look around for an alliance, and believing the Republican Party the stronger on account of the great negro vote, identified itself with Republicanism. The Republicans, moreover, welcomed such an alliance because of their weakened influence and numbers, and fully supported the project.

In December, 1892, the State Alliance Executive Committee held a meeting. It was commonly known that the Alliance head-

quarters was the Third Party's political quarters. It was through this organization that Marion Butler received his publicity. It should be said, however, to the credit of the Alliance that no such policy was welcomed, but was put through by pressure.

The Populist Party movement, which began in 1892, opened its campaign for the election of 1894 in the early part of April. The opening scene was a large gathering at Conetoe for the purpose of celebrating the surrender of General Robert E. Lee. About six hundred men participated in a parade, headed by a brass band from Greenville. The principal Third Party speech was made by John Philips, of Pitt County. The silver question was aired and the Democratic Party was abused for its party measures. Party antics were displayed by rigging up a negro boy in a white sash on which was written the word "Democracy." The boy was then mounted on a big steer and placed in the main body of the procession.

Like many similar spontaneous movements which agitated needful reforms, the Populist Party never acquired a firm and suitable organization to do effective campaigning or to give sufficient publicity and educational work. Moreover it damaged itself by embracing any and all who claimed admission to its ranks. This policy, while not noticeable at the beginning, became more and more in evidence toward the close of the party's history. In July, 1894, the party being more or less short of speakers, invited men of questionable characters as well as limited ability to make stump speeches. A drummer, reported as carrying samples in soap and drug supplies, was solicited to make an address before a Populist Club at Leggetts. He called himself a true silver Democrat, but in his address he showed the principle of Populism. His text was on Grover Cleveland and silver, and his slogan was "Down with the Democratic Party."

In the meantime, various conventions had been held by the political parties in the county. The Democratic ticket put out was as follows: W. P. Mercer, for Senate; W. O. Howard and M. B. Pitt, for House of Representatives; Dr. I. P. Wynn, for coroner; B. F. Dawson, for register of deeds; W. T. Knight, for sheriff; S. S. Nash, for treasurer; and Ed Pennington, for clerk.

The Republican convention, acting under the leadership of Moses Chase, chairman, and John Lloyd, secretary, put out W. S.

Stallings for sheriff; James J. Martin, clerk; Joseph Cobb, register of deeds; B. J. Keech, treasurer; Charles I. Law, coroner; Elbert E. Bryan, Senate; Lee Person and York Garrett, House of Representatives.

The Populist Party in its convention endorsed candidates that were on both the Democratic and Republican ticket. They, however, had distinct party candidates for some of the offices in both State and county. The ticket was as follows: W. L. Stallings, sheriff; Ed Pennington, clerk; Joseph Cobb, register of deeds; J. F. Shackelford, treasurer; Dr. W. T. Mayo, coroner; James B. Lloyd, Senate; J. Latham and J. I. Lewis, House of Representatives.

Naturally the Democrats had the better organization, since they had not been subject to the numerous divisions, doubts, and popular political waves of the nineties. Young men's clubs were scattered practically all over the county. William Summerlin, a man without very much education, but of a great native ability proved of useful service in his labors around St. Louis. He possessed good common sense, and his humor and wit were unexcelled in the county. In July, 1894, he opened up on the Populist Party. His most familiar comparative joke was that on Mr. Procter, who owned a mill pond. It was told that no one but those who possessed Populist tendencies were permitted to fish on Mr. Procter's pond, and on one occasion the announcement came that Mr. Procter was going to let off his pond. The fishing was good, and there never was seen so many Third Party men in the county. Every man, on being asked, said he was "third, too," since, if he were not, there would be no fishing for him.

The Democratic Party possessed practically the same organization from the year 1892. The *Tarboro Southerner*, the official organ of the party, became the mouthpiece for all party questions and issues. The Populist ranked next in organization and effectiveness. James B. Lloyd, former Democrat and editor of the *Advocate*, became an ardent endorser of the Populist Party, became a nominee for the Senate and dedicated his paper to the services of the party. The Populists also were not without

staunch supporters from almost every type of citizen. Dr. Mayo and John Shackleford and others constituted an influential element and bid fair to make a respectable showing.

The Populist Party opened up its campaign of 1894 at St. Lewis, which had the reputation of being a populist center. Pitt's store was the gathering place. John I. Lewis was the leader in the community. Meares, of Wilson, introduced James B. Lloyd, who was the principal speaker. The issues discussed were the bad legislation on the part of both Democrats and Republicans, the stabling of silver, general criticism of Grover Cleveland's administration, and the internal improvement program. At this time Mr. Lloyd was not committed to fusion with the Republicans, and could not explain why in the West the Populists abused the Republicans and allied with the Democrats, while in the South they cursed the Democrats and allied with the Republicans.

The Republicans, although theoretically in the majority because of the negro vote, had no newspaper support and relied upon the individual and collective effort of the party. The party plans were more or less lacking in system and depended largely upon the majority forces it enjoyed. In this respect the results proved disastrous since many of the negroes were in direct sympathy with the Democrats.

Between the three parties in the county the contestants were the Democrats and the Populists. J. B. Lloyd became the recognized leader of the latter, while the former had the help of W. O. Howard, John L. Bridgers, Donnell Gilliam, and others.

The climax came in October when Lloyd, feeling it his duty and appreciating his ability as a Populist speaker, requested a chance to meet Honorable R. B. Glenn in discussion. The request was complied with when Glenn spoke in the city hall, and Lloyd was given an opportunity to speak, but declined for lack of preparation. The debate, therefore, was held October 22, 1894, before a tremendous gathering at the city hall. About fifty Populists were present and about eight hundred Democrats.

Lloyd made a grave mistake in undertaking to debate with Glenn. Glenn had the reputation of being an orator, versed in State and National affairs, and a man of considerable public



service. Lloyd's information and experience were, on the other hand, limited to local issues, and had only a limited experience as a debater.

In the meantime, the Populist Party was not to escape the sad fate at the hands of the Democrats and Democratic sympathizers. The party was stigmatized through its chairman by a well composed and somewhat humorous poem emanating from "Buzzard's Roost,"<sup>1</sup> N. C., the headquarters of the county poet. The poem is quoted in full and is as follows:

"My name is Chairman Jimmie,  
I'll take just what you gim'me,  
And not be dissatisfied at all;  
Only give me some direction,  
And guarantee protection,  
From the trouble that's a' coming in the fall.

"I'll tell you what is so,  
I'll tell you FOR I KNOW,  
There's going to be big trouble in the fall;  
Unless you write me out a check,  
I cannot stay upon the deck,  
And face the onslaught of the coming squall.

"You may think that it is funny,  
But I'll swear I must have money,  
To meet the campaign bills both great and small;  
The speakers must be paid,  
And a strong foundation laid,  
To gain the victory surely in the fall.

"Now there is Mr. Nigger,  
I'll swear by Je-menny-Jigger,  
We must catch him pretty soon in one big haul;  
We must not be a-fooling,  
Or try too much a-ruling,  
But quiet him for voting in the fall.

"At first he's pretty high,  
But just wait, by and by,  
And we'll put in some good work, that is all;  
If we know where he's at,  
We'll have things strictly pat,  
And then there'll be no trouble in the fall.

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<sup>1</sup> An anonymous designation employed by the Democratic paper in the county.

“So up and be a-doing,  
And keep the things a-stewing,  
And hollow silver everywhere you go;  
Give the Democrats the Devil,  
And tell the folks the evil,  
That is now upon your land, and swear its so.

“Make your tariff d—n low,  
For heaven’s sake, don’t show  
The trouble it has brought upon us all;  
If you do, the jig is up,  
I’ll sure throw down the cup,  
And leave you men to catch h—l in the fall.

“Be careful what you say,  
And don’t in any way,  
Give them credit for the Federal Bill that’s dead;  
Let the Income Tax alone,  
For if it’s passed, I’ll swear we’re gone,  
And put to sleep upon a funeral bed.

“Cry an ‘Honest ballot law,’  
Until you split your jaw,  
Telling all about the frauds that you’ve seen done;  
The Democrats will laugh,  
Like a spring-time sickly calf,  
That loves to sleep and take the morning sun.

“Now for my little work,  
I just want to be clerk,  
And there I’ll truly serve you, one and all;  
But for me to get this place,  
WE ALL must run the race,  
And fight to win the vict’ry in the fall.”

The Republicans were also subject to a similar fate by the Democrats. By not having any press they had no means of public retaliation and the matter was more or less a one-sided affair. George Lloyd was depicted as being out of place running for office with Ed. Bridgers, Moses Chase, and Geoffrey Hyman. He was accused of drunkenness, gambling, and loafing. His three colleagues were accused of larceny and received considerable notoriety over the disappearance of a bale of cotton, a cow, and about \$400.00 belonging to Thomas Johnson. Hyman was tried for stealing the money and acquitted.

In the meantime, the Democrats themselves were more or less annoyed over a division in their own ranks. W. E. Fountain, quite a prominent Democrat and for several times mayor of Tarboro, caused a split in his party due to a disagreement over appointments of delegates, and ultimately became a member of the minority party. Later developments presented a difficulty with Mr. Lloyd, of which more after awhile.

From the alignments and organizations of the various parties it was obvious which way the election would go in Edgecombe. It was a game fight, hard, bitter, and disagreeably unpleasant, and with a political victory for the Democrats. Much credit was given the negroes, for hundreds desired no fusion ticket and under proper solicitation from the Democrats voted a straight ticket for democracy. One incident is worthy of notice. The voting had been in progress for some hours when it was learned that the Democratic candidate for coroner had been working for a friend of the Populist-Fusion-Republican ticket. This necessitated a considerable scratching on the local ticket. The entire county ticket was elected by a small but sure majority, while the county also gave a majority for State and judicial tickets. Congressman Woodard received 700 plurality and Walter Daniel, for solicitor, was only a small number behind Woodard. The Fusionists, however, captured the State Legislature, and herein lies another story effecting Edgecombe.

The Legislature being in control of the Republicans and Fusionists, the first act was to appoint magistrates in the various counties by the Legislature, as heretofore had been done. Of course, it was not expected that Democrats would be appointed in Edgecombe. Listen to the magistrate appointments: Y. D. Garret and Turner prince (colored), to No. 1 Township; Robert Brown (colored), No. 2; Samuel Howard (colored), No. 3; T. D. Bellamy (colored), No. 4; E. C. Bryan (colored), No. 5; William Johnson (colored), No. 7; Frank Deed (colored), No. 8; Alfred Reid (colored), No. 9; and David Lawrence (colored), No. 11.

The Democratic party, ever cognizant of political snares, had proceeded to revoke the law giving the magistrates the power to appoint the commissioners when it became inevitable that a Republican Legislature would be in power for the following year. The Justices of the Peace had been shorn of all political power.

They could not elect county commissioners nor members of the board of education, while in the matter of levying taxes they were to take no part. Their power, on the other hand, consisted in petty and limited jurisdiction of criminal cases. The Fusionists, however, in spite of this fact, decided in a caucus to increase this number in order to accommodate party supporters. There were many whose services were not needed and who had nothing to do.

Edgewcombe was fortunate in having succeeded in preventing the Legislature in establishing many courts as it originally intended to do. Letters and petitions were presented against incorporating Edgewcombe County in the bill for erecting more courts, and many of the Populists left the party caucus and voted to exempt Edgewcombe. The county was later included, however, in the vote. Many who were present claimed that the first vote was taken to exempt Edgewcombe, but the clerks counted the vote in accord with the caucus decree rather than exclude it as a single measure.

When the Legislature convened in March, 1895, considerable excitement prevailed over the disclosure of party wrangles in the county. The Populist Republican party indirectly contested the Democratic representative, W. O. Howard, through the defeated Republican candidate, Lee Person (colored). The *Raleigh News and Observer* gives the account from which an extract is taken.

When Edgewcombe was called, Person, who was defeated for the House, stepped forward. He was extremely nervous and excited, and in a loud voice demanded that the entire list of magistrates be discarded and a list he himself had made up be put in its place. "I have been defrauded of my seat," declared Person, "and I am the proper man to recommend the magistrates."

James B. Lloyd, chairman of the Populist Executive Committee of the county and assistant clerk of the Senate, and J. J. Martin, a prominent Republican, had made the list and submitted it. Upon learning this, Person accused Lloyd and Martin of an act never before charged to them. In high tones Person said, "These two men have sold out to the Democrats, and I don't want their list appointed. Out of eighty-six magistrates, not ten are Republicans, and I will taken an oath to what I say. Bring out your books and swear me. These people have been robbing us negroes, and your committee haven't got sense enough to know it."



Chairman Evart called Person down, and informed him that the committee conducted its business in a respectable and orderly manner, and that they expected those who came before it to act accordingly. Mr. Evart said, "If you have any charges to make against any individuals on the list, make them; the committee will not throw out the entire list on such general wholesale charges." "If that be your tactics," replied Person, "I withdraw my list, and you can do as you please with the whole business."

Person was incorrect in his assertion as to the number of Republicans. Each township, when the increase was made, had one colored man on the list. The trouble seems to have arisen over the fact that Person himself had aspirations to be a justice and was left out of the promised spoils resulting from politics. The Fusionists, however, succeeded in reversing the election laws and aspired to carry the State in the next election by the power of Gideon's Band<sup>1</sup> and the negro churches. The occasion for the change in the election law was the fact that in all eastern counties and in Edgecombe in particular, many negroes had evinced a desire to vote the Democratic ticket, but were afraid because of ostracism and violence, or expulsion from the churches. Prior to the change of voting by the Australian system, the colored people enjoyed the privacy of voting and were not intimidated. Under the new method, however, secrecy could not be had, thereby causing negroes to be betrayed in their manner of voting.

The silver movement by 1895 had reached such proportions in the county that a silver convention was organized. The organization was nonpolitical and was intended to be primarily educational and to teach people the history of the silver agitation. It had its origin in September, 1895, and was convened by James B. Lloyd and Dr. W. J. Mayo, temporary chairman. W. E. Fountain was subsequently elected president, Frank B. Lloyd permanent secretary and treasurer, Dr. J. M. Baker, Walter Thigpen, and B. J. Keech, vice-presidents; Dr. T. P. Wynn, B. J. Keech, and J. A. Davis, executive committee; F. B. Lloyd, J. M. Baker, and H. C. Bourne, committee on lectures; and B. J. Keech, J. B. Lloyd, and John L. Bridgers, committee on organization. The mutual understanding, as voiced by W. O. Howard, was that all

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<sup>1</sup> A local organization of negroes.

political parties were to get together in an organization on non-partisan plans and to educate the people and themselves, and then return to their respective party when voting time came.

At the same time the State Legislature was reproducing scenes which dominated the Legislature of General Canby's time. Politics sacrificed sentiment, honesty and the supremacy of the white race to secure power and the advantages that it gave. However well the Republicans and Populists succeeded in increasing their ranks for the time being, their exercise of power produced a bad effect upon the people of North Carolina, that ultimately caused their undoing; and party issues in Edgecombe slowly died out.

From all indications in the year 1895 the Fusionists of Edgecombe, consisting of Populists and Republicans, were in a better position numerically than the Democrats. A good number of the men left the Democratic party, after supporting it in 1894, because they could not accept Grover Cleveland. Many also joined the Populist party because of its silver issue and began a preparation to support Bryan upon his silver platform. Not a few in 1896 began to feel the weight of one dollar being worth only seventy-nine cents and later fifty cents, and, in their extremity, cast their lot with the party seeking financial reforms.

With the beginning of 1896 James B. Lloyd, a popular and influential Populist, was assisted in his activities in the county by Mr. Joe Martin, playing second fiddle, and quite a numerous crowd of negroes dancing to the tune of Populism.

The Democrats, realizing the situation, went so far as to make overtures to the Populists and intimated that they should return to the old party. They expressed their sentiments on issues for which the Populists were clamoring when they endorsed W. J. Bryan for their national leader. The Populist who had also endorsed this ticket, showed their faith by their works, and the county was carried by a large majority for silver in 1896.

In the meantime, Marion Butler had presented a proposition to the Democrats of the State whereby there was to be a division of offices between the Democrats and Populists. That is to say, they were to split fifty-fifty and run in this party fashion for the campaign of 1896. The Democrats refused.

The State Republican convention met in Raleigh May 14th, when a contest for Governor had been on for a long time, with

many contested seats. The nomination for Governor was made after a bitter contest, with the first ballot giving Daniel R. Russell the nomination. The negro Republican convention was called to Raleigh July 2d, and repudiated the nomination on fraudulent grounds, and branded him as a man who had proclaimed that the negro was largely savage, and that all negroes followed rascals who stole six days in the week and went to church on the seventh to pray their sins away. Edgecombe was well represented in this convention, and Russell became odious to the intelligent class of negroes in the county.

During the campaign Russell visited Tarboro and spoke in the city hall. He had modified his previous remarks, and under the assistance of Joe Martin made overtures to the negroes of the county. These efforts in all probability succeeded in moderating the intense feeling against Russell personally. It was reported that in his speech Russell went to the other extreme in his praise for the negroes, and depicted the bad treatment that the negro had received at the hands of the Democrats. This was resented on the part of the whites.

The local democracy had nominated a respectable and able ticket. By a half spirited compromise they succeeded in electing only a part of the candidates. The Fusionists elected W. L. Person (negro) to the State Senate; Elbert E. Bryan and J. H. Dancy to the House of Representatives. Yet a worse blow still awaited the Democracy in the majority vote for George White (negro), who was elected to represent this district in the United States Congress. Mack Lloyd (negro) also served on the board of commissioners. For the first time in twenty years all branches of the State, and practically all branches of the local government, passed into the hands of another political party.

The Democratic defeat of 1896 was in many respects very effective and did much lasting good for the party. However, the victory for the Republican-Populist party served to make an adjustment in legislative laws which had grown more or less beneficial for the party in power. It taught the party to appreciate activity, and to make plans for more intelligent legislation. There is no truer saying than evil cannot be legislated from a life. The same is also true in regard to the legal right to exercise political and economic liberty. It requires constructive legisla-

tion, a standing for sound and economic issues to make politics successful in any party. While the Republican and Populist parties in the county held the majority, the Democrats were invariably in the rule, since the power was acquired by legislative strategy and unscrupulous means of party control. The victory of 1896 did the purging and the party turned its face to the front for redemption in 1898.

During the beginning of this year it became obvious that the contest for political supremacy was to be a bitter one. The party alliance existing between the Republicans and the Populists made a strong opponent, and the Democrats who had lost ground the preceding election knew the effort necessary for victory. In the effort to recover lost prestige, the Democrats were charged with making solicitations to the negroes and also of making political affiliations heretofore laid to the Republicans. One charge of grave repute is related in the county which is indicative of the charges generally made by the Fusionist party.

Francis D. Winston, of Windsor, N. C., was a candidate for judge, according to a conventional nomination, which had also placed George H. White, of Edgecombe, in nomination as solicitor. Winston had been commissioned in 1897 to organize "White Leagues" to rally votes to the Democratic standard. A letter, reported to have been written by Mr. Winston to George H. White, of Rocky Mount, was circulated in the county and all eastern counties with the purpose of showing the movement on the part of the Democrats to win the negro vote. The letter, addressed to George H. White, reads:

"MY DEAR SIR:—I regret that I cannot attend the Judicial Convention on account of pressing engagements. Please put in a word to further my nomination for judge. While there is not much hope for an election, still the remote possibility of riding the district with you is a great pleasure."

In the meanwhile, Marion Butler, who had already acquired considerable publicity in the State, made his tour through the eastern counties and stopped in Rocky Mount. Senator Butler was reported by the *Rocky Mount Argonaut*, a Democratic paper, as saying that "If colored men commit outrages, the Democrats pretend to be terribly shocked in public, but when they get behind the wall they laugh until they grow fat, and if the outrages are not



frequent enough, they hire worthless negroes to commit them." Thus the campaign of 1898 opened with charges and counter charges. Among the several citizens present in Rocky Mount, and who were to take an active part in the Populist campaign, were W. E. Fountain and James B. Lloyd, former Democrats. These men, with others, made affidavits that Butler made no such statements. Almost no issue calculated to incite the passion and to make political capital was omitted during the campaign.

The Democratic convention was held in Tarboro October 18, 1898, with more than 5,000 present from Pitt, Nash, and Wilson counties. A mass meeting, with barbecue and brass band, was the preliminary reception to those participating. Every township in the county sent a big delegation, while the speakers' stand was adorned with flowers, women and children in the rally for Democracy. B. F. Aycock, of Wayne County, was the principal speaker. Inclement weather interrupted the outdoor gathering, and the audience divided in two divisions; one led by Donnell Gilliam in the town hall, and the other proceeded to the courthouse. Mr. F. M. Simmons addressed the town hall audience, and Aycock delivered another speech at the courthouse. The convention for business was conducted at the Jeffries Warehouse, when the following ticket was nominated: J. H. Harris, sheriff; B. F. Dawson, register of deeds; Ed. Pennington, clerk; J. W. B. Battle, treasurer; Dr. R. H. Speight, Senate; S. L. Hart, House of Representatives; Dr. S. M. Hassell, coroner; John Howard, surveyor; and S. S. Nash, E. L. Daughtridge and W. S. Crisp, county commissioners. This ticket was a very formidable one, and was destined to make a creditable showing.

The Fusionists held two conventions prior to the election. One was Republican and the other was Populist. They agreed to support the Fusion ticket, which was more or less dominantly negro.

Before the campaign was well under way confusion resulted when it became apparent there had been dissatisfaction among the negroes over the Republicans securing all offices in the State except ten. This was done in spite of the 30,000 white Republicans, as compared with the 120,000 negro Republicans.

The campaign was opened with W. E. Fountain, bolted Democrat, chairman of the People's Party, of Edgecombe County, and

also chairman of the congressional committee. James B. Lloyd served on the conference committee appointed by the State convention. In this capacity, he became one of the committeemen who proposed an alliance with the Democrats May, 1898, to coöperate in the silver and financial reforms. Same being rejected he became closely allied with Dr. Cyrus Thompson, one of the prominent leaders of the Populist party in the State. The Populists met in the beginning of the campaign and nominated him for Congress, the position then occupied by George H. White, Republican. Immediately after his nomination the *News and Observer*, of Raleigh, claimed Lloyd was nominated in the second district in order to elect the negro. The reason for this was, that since the Democrats did not have out a candidate of their own at the time, it became a choice of either Lloyd or White, and that Edgecombe preferred White to Lloyd. Political capital was made of the issue by Dr. Cyrus Thompson, who predicted that the Democrats would do as that party suggested to the Populists to do—"Vote for a man who exactly fills the bill," meaning Lloyd. The rejection of the Populist proposition at the Democratic State convention indicated that White would receive support in preference to Lloyd.

In the meantime, politics in Edgecombe, like the Irishman's breeches in the Pullman car wreck, had received a twist. It happened in the People's Party, between two of its own supporters, and received much notoriety in the State and was considered as sounding the farewell of Populism. W. E. Fountain, it appeared, was the political friend of James B. Lloyd, and in the congressional convention, which met in Wilson, July 28, 1898, was active in the support of Mr. Lloyd, who had been nominated by acclamation. It also appeared that considerable feeling was expressed against the methods employed by the Democratic managers in carrying out the campaign; that at the time Fountain did not express himself as favoring or disapproving the issue which was raised relative to supporting the negro candidate, George H. White, in opposition to Lloyd for Congress.

A special committee was appointed by the county executive committee to arrange coöperation in Edgecombe. Lloyd was not present, but wrote Fountain and also the committee that no coöperation was desired, if as a condition precedent a negro was

to be supported. Lloyd's suggestion, however, was ignored. Fountain, on the other hand, was accused of giving acquiescence to the purpose to support negroes in certain offices, while Lloyd excused himself upon the declaration that he had repeatedly told Fountain he would not support a negro if put on the ticket.

After the convention had acted, Lloyd urged Fountain to re-assemble his committee and denounce the plan of coöperation, since it was obvious the voters would not support the ticket. Fountain declined, and when the campaign began, as congressional chairman, Fountain advised him not to draw the color line in his speeches. It seems that this policy was observed and subsequently met the objection of Fountain, who had advised its performance. Fountain in a letter said:

"Captain Lloyd realized this fully, and also that he had made an irretrievable mistake, in not meeting the issue." As manager of Lloyd's campaign, Fountain soon repudiated his own suggestion "to discuss economic issues and not that of the race issue," and in ten days of the election went back into the Democratic party and became a candidate against Lloyd.

The real issue grew out of the declaration of Lloyd that if by his running the negro would receive a greater support, he would withdraw from the race, if another candidate would come forward. Fountain, who had approached Lloyd in the matter, did not intimate his intentions to run against him. When informed of his purpose, Lloyd expressed his surprise and told Fountain it looked as if he were undermining him.

Mr. Lloyd, however, according to his promise, withdrew in Fountain's favor. When Fountain made his appeal to the committee, time was requested to present the matter before the congressional committee, but when it became obvious that time was short, the issue was withdrawn without Fountain being endorsed as a candidate.

The Democratic convention met at Goldsboro, October 28th and Fountain was present and made a speech. The following is an extract: "I am no politician, but a plain business man, and have no desire for office." In less than ten days Fountain was a candidate for Congress and was subsequently defeated, when Edgecombe County sent the only negro Congressman to Washington for that year.

Many Democrats disapproved the acts of Fountain, while the *Charlotte Observer*, a strong Democratic paper, denounced his actions.

The campaign issue of 1898 was unquestionably racial, while the episode between the two parties, as already related, was justified by the fact that the race was thrust before the people. That this was to be the issue, however, was known, as it was indicated by a letter issued by Fountain prior to the campaign. In fact, the race issues had received such importance that Governor Russell had issued a proclamation covering the situation. The fact that Edgecombe and all the eastern counties had passed under negro control by reason of fusion of parties; according to all the principal State papers where negroes were deputy sheriffs, school examiners, Congressmen, and register of deeds; this was ample cause for an issue based on the racial question. Fountain, in 1897, following the publicity given the appearance of the idea of negro colonization in North Carolina, after they had gained control in 1896, issued a circular when chairman of the Populist State Committee in 1897.

"You may have recently observed," said he, "that certain Democratic papers in this State are endeavoring now to revive the race question in order to make that the dominant issue in the next campaign. If you have kept posted as to political affairs in this State in years past, you will recall that periodically when the Democrats had no issue to go before the people with, they endeavored to frighten the people into supporting their party by crying 'nigger.' The negro is an element in politics we cannot get clear of. They should be handled wisely and not create racial prejudices and possible strife. The Southern Railroad would be delighted, no doubt, to have that issue revived in order to conceal its plans and movements to control the next Legislature, to prevent any action looking to the annulment of the ninety-nine-year lease. Let no one be alarmed or deceived. The issue is now equally and fairly drawn; shall the people of North Carolina control the political affairs of the State, or shall they be controlled by the Southern Railroad? Shall we exercise our right of sovereignty or shall we permit the agent of J. Pierpont Morgan to



direct and control the destinies of this great Commonwealth? The people of North Carolina must answer this, the paramount question now before them for settlement."

Fountain had, soon after writing the above, turned a Democrat and supported those who had no issue but the cry of "nigger." The point with Fountain was that he saw the race question as an "overshadowing issue" and at the same time thought he saw a prospective seat in Congress. Even when he was writing his letter the negroes throughout the State were organizing to seize all legislative and judicial offices of the State, and make this land a paradise for the negroes. The crime of the days of reconstruction had returned in all its lawlessness and horror. Princeville, just across the river from Tarboro, was a perfect scene of unrestrained violence. Drew Battle and William Morris burned Judge Philips's stables, while Clarence Davis, for a heinous crime,<sup>1</sup> had a reward of \$200.00 offered by the Governor for his capture. He was later captured and carried to Durham for safe keeping until a special term of court could be called to pass sentence. The State generally was in such lawless state that the northern press turned to North Carolina for its sensational news reports.

No county made stronger efforts nor achieved greater results in eliminating the racial evil, for it is the candid opinion of every thinking man in the county that had the negro continued in the power enjoyed from 1896 to 1898 a civil war between the races would have resulted. The names of C. B. Aycock, T. A. Woodard, General W. R. Cox, W. E. Daniel, T. D. Winston, and F. M. Simmons should still be remembered with reverence and appreciation. These men caused the county to be divided into districts, and each district was given a speaker to discuss the various issues, namely—tariff, silver theory, and racial problems.

On November 8, 1898, the fruits of these men and others was harvested in the election. The Democrats won a decided victory both in the county and the State, Tarboro giving Democratic legislative and county ticket a majority of 2,511, a majority for the State ticket of 606, while Fountain carried the county by 250. The Democrats had a majority in both branches of the

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<sup>1</sup> Burning the residence of Mrs. Turner Battle, she being in the house at the time, and then attempting to loot what was left.

Legislature, the control of affairs being completely reversed from 1896, H. A. Gilliam and S. L. Hart being Edgecombe representatives, while Dr. R. H. Speight succeeded W. L. Person in the Senate. George H. White, however, was returned to Congress, having received a majority vote in the district.

Reaction immediately set in when celebrations were held in all the towns in North Carolina. Race riots occurred in Wilmington and Newbern. The editors of papers of Populist sympathy and who had supported the party became subject to violence. The paper controlled by Manly, of Wilmington, was burned, while Lloyd, of the *Advocate*, in Tarboro, was more or less under political ostracism when he left the State for Washington. His paper was sold to Marion Butler, the equipment dismantled and sent away from the county. The *Caucasian* was practically the only paper of any consequence in the State which remained intact after the defeat.

The war which had been declared with Spain meanwhile caused a faint ripple over local politics, and Edgecombe proceeded to assume her obligations in defense of the State she had so gallantly honored a few decades previous. The activities of Edgecombe men centered around Company I, Second North Carolina Regiment. This company was made up from Leggets, Rocky Mount, Tarboro, and other neighboring towns in Eastern North Carolina. Captain John W. Cotton was commissioned May 11, 1898, to head the company, but he soon resigned to become major of the Second Regiment. Major Cotton had seen twenty-three years' service in the State Guard, seven years of which he filled the highest position, that of brigadier general.

Upon his resignation, Carl W. Jeffries, of Tarboro, was appointed captain. He resigned while at St. Francis Barracks, Florida, receiving his discharge September 5, 1898. James B. Jenkins was then appointed captain and John Howard first lieutenant. Among the noncommissioned officers of the county were William H. Baker, first sergeant; Joseph A. Warren, Q. M. sergeant; Charles H. Jenkins, sergeant; William C. Suggs, sergeant; Thomas H. Gatlin, Jr., sergeant; Walter Lee Simmons, sergeant; William Mitchell, corporal; George W. Smithson, corporal;

Thomas H. Peters, corporal; James W. Lawrence, corporal; Thomas Hussey, corporal; Benjamin F. Long, corporal; Wiliford W. Haynes, artificer.

Among the privates from the county were John J. Archer, James E. Askin, Joseph D. Brann, Ed Carter, James B. Cosby, Frank W. Davis, Thaddeus Downing, Guion Gabriel, Harry L. Griffin, Henry L. Leggitts, Paul Mitrick, and John W. Moore. The company was organized in the early part of May, 1898, and was mustered in the service at Raleigh, N. C. It soon entered into a rigid course of drill and discipline, which gave an excellent degree of efficiency. All the tactics of modern warfare were practiced with emphasis placed on physical exercise and fitness.

After more than six weeks of daily drill the regiment was divided, with Companies C and I, under Major Cotton, being sent to St. Augustine, Fla. At this station the men merited the approval of their officers. The men were not to see service, for negotiations interrupted their prospective fight with the Spaniards. The several detachments of the regiment were ordered back to Raleigh, and all the men given a thirty-day furlough preliminary to being mustered out. Before the men could return to Raleigh previous orders were revoked, and on November 23, 1898, the company was mustered out at Tarboro. Edgecombe lost two men, John Godley and Samuel F. Johnson, who died from disease in July. Charlie Badgett, of Mildred, N. C., received his discharge October 14, 1898, by order.

There were also other enlistments from the county who served in other companies in the Second Regiment. Among the number was W. B. Howard, first sergeant of Company C, and Hinton E. Bell, private, of the regimental staff and band.

Immediately following the election of 1898, the colored population had an outlet for their political ambitions in Princeville. Politics here, however, resulted frequently in a squabble and a wrangle in politics was no unusual occurrence. In 1899, when the local election was held, town officials then in office, refused to turn over their offices to newly elected officials. The former set up a claim that the election was a nullity, and proceeded to transact business as usual. On Monday after the election notices were served on Frank Battle, mayor; Orren James, J. G. Hyman, William Cook, Walter Alvis, and W. A. Hines, commissioners;

Turner Prince, treasurer. The proceedings resulted in their surrender. Princeville was then governed by Orren James, mayor; Daniel Hammond, E. F. Wooten, Walter Alvis, and Freeland Roberts as commissioners; and Abram Wooten, treasurer.

The town election in Tarboro for this year was the quietest since the war. In no ward was there any opposition to the Democratic candidates. Not even in the Third Ward, which had always been strongly contested. R. E. L. Cook had no one to oppose him. Gus Tander received the majority vote in the First Ward; Louis Arnhiem, the Second Ward, while R. E. L. Cook received a majority vote of ninety-one in the Third. The vote generally was very light.

R. B. Hyatt was elected chief of police, and L. B. Knight and J. J. Pittman were newly elected county commissioners to serve with Dr. L. L. Staton, George Howard, Jr., and S. E. Speight, when the Legislature authorized, in 1899, an increase from three to five. Dr. J. H. Baker was elected mayor and J. A. Clark, treasurer.

In August, 1899, friction resulted over an interference between Mayor Baker and Chief of Police Hyatt, which resulted in the latter's resignation. Mr. Hyatt objected to the mayor's interfering directly with employees under his supervision and for whom he was responsible. His resignation being accepted, John W. Cotton was appointed to take the place of chief of police. He remained in this office several years.

The racial question had abated with the exception of trouble over a few negroes occupying the position of postmasters in the county. These were maintained by White, United States Congressman, of Edgecombe. J. W. Hargett was postmaster at Rocky Mount, but was soon removed in 1899, due to an arrest by postoffice authorities on a misappropriation of funds. A negro woman was postmistress at Lawrence, her bond having been signed by F. D. Dancy, of Tarboro. After the incident at Rocky Mount he became frightened and wrote to the Postmaster-General, asking to be relieved from the bond. Dancy was a colored man who by thrift and attention had accumulated some property of value.

The election held in August, 1900, eliminated all questions of racial politics. The Populist Party was demoralized, while the



negro constituted the rank and file of the Republicans. The tactics of the election was one, therefore, of physical argument against mental argument.

At this time a constitutional amendment qualifying suffrage was submitted to the people as follows:

"He shall have resided in the State of North Carolina for two years, in the county for six months, and in the precinct, ward, or other election district in which he offers to vote four months next preceding the election: Provided, that removal from one precinct, ward, or other election district to another in the same county shall not operate to deprive any person the right to vote in the precinct, ward, or other election district from which he has removed until four months after such removal. No person who has been guilty in open court upon indictment of any crime, the punishment of which now is, or may hereafter be, imprisoned in the State Prison, shall be permitted to vote, unless the said person shall be restored to citizenship in the manner prescribed by law."

After omitting article three, the amendment reads:

"Every person presenting himself for registration shall be able to read and write any section of the Constitution in the English language before he shall be entitled to vote. But no male person who was, on January 1, 1867, or any time prior thereto, entitled to vote under the laws of any State in the United States wherein he then resided, and no lineal descendant of any person, shall be denied the right to register and vote at any election in the State by reason of his failure to possess the educational qualifications herein presented: Provided, he shall have registered in accordance with the terms of this sections prior to December 1, 1898."

This amendment was submitted and adopted as a plan for the restriction of suffrage, and was intended to go into effect July 1, 1900. The results of this amendment needs no comment. The negro who was unable to read could not vote, while the illiterate white man, by reason of his ability to vote prior to 1867, and his descendants who might also be illiterate, by virtue of his father or his grandfather's right to vote, had political suffrage. The North Carolina amendment, however, put a time limitation upon the working of the grandfather clause. No illiterate white could gain the exemption provided for unless he had registered prior to December, 1908. Hence all illiterate whites coming of age since that time would be disfranchised. The negro, therefore, when he

voted August, 1900, was voting for or against his political liberty. The campaign was so conducted during this year. The Democrats, however, had the majority in the Legislature and State officers, and gave the negro and Republicans little hope for success either campaign or in the legislative hall.

Edgecombe put out the following ticket: Dr. R. H. Speight, for Senate; Daughtridge and Shelton, for the House of Representatives; J. R. Harris, sheriff; and J. W. B. Battle, treasurer. F. M. Simmons was the county's choice to succeed White in Congress. These men appeared in a body in their canvass of the county, and spoke in the opera house at Rocky Mount, July 24th. Paul Jones, editor of the *North Carolina Law Journal*, aided in the canvass and made the closing speech at Rocky Mount.

In addition the Democrats of Edgecombe by July were conducting their usual aggressive canvass under Donnell Gilliam, the county chairman. He was perhaps the most enthusiastic supporter of Democracy in the eastern counties. During this campaign, that the people were conducting for the election on the second day in August of county and State officers, and to take the sense of the people on amending the State Constitution, he made speeches in every township. Under his guidance Democratic rallies were held in different parts of the county. In this campaign no opposition was made, since by actual count there remained only eighty-five Populists, while its organization had ceased to exist.

The issue being one entirely between the races it was logical to anticipate racial trouble. Prior to the meeting of the Legislature to ratify the amendment, it became hinted that the Legislature would retain the negro's rights for political purposes. The *Tarboro Southerner*, realizing this hint under its editorial head, "What will be done?" says: "Will the next Legislature pass an election law so intelligence may rule, or will it keep the negro for political purposes? This present election was caused solely by drawing the color line. Let it stay drawn by giving the intelligent voters only the right of franchise. The press all over the State is harping on who is entitled to the spoils. Just do something to show that every promise has been carried out. Don't let them be disappointed. The Democrats are the State guardians for the next two years, so let them do their full duty."

The color line being drawn, and the whites arraigned against the negroes, there sprang up in the county numerous clubs known as the "White Supremacy Clubs." One was organized at Rocky Mount on the Edgecombe side,<sup>1</sup> July 2, 1900, with Dr. Charles L. Killebrew as president. One was also organized in Tarboro. Claude Kitchin was most active in this organization, while Donnell Gilliam was a prominent leader and promoter of its interests.

During the latter part of June the Republican convention met in Tarboro with not more than thirty present, while no white leader was in evidence. The fact that the issue was purely racial drew many whites of other political faith to the Democratic party. Many Populists and Republicans supported the amendment under a pretext of taking the color question out of politics. They hoped in return to replenish their ranks with whites who would take the negro's place.

The hopelessness on the part of the negro to offset the political trend was expressed by George H. White, negro Congressman from Edgecombe, and the negro leader in the Second Congressional District. He was later generally denounced throughout the State for his expression.

In July White made a speech in which he advised the members of his race that the white people had it in their power to control the election, and if they did not treat the people right, he and other leaders would see that the matter was taken into the courts, and if the courts did not give them justice, then he would say, "May God damn North Carolina, the State of my birth."

Racial feeling ran higher at Rocky Mount, perhaps, than in Tarboro. It was reported by hardware dealers at this place that negroes were registering steadily and buying large quantities of ammunition for some purpose. It was also current that many negroes made threats in case the amendments were passed.

August 2, 1900, there appeared in politics of both State and county one of the most important and vital issues of political history. It was time to settle, as Dr. Cyrus Thompson, noted Populist leader, affirmed, whether the Democrats would have

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<sup>1</sup> The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad divides the town, leaving one-half in Nash County and the other in Edgecombe.

political power indefinitely. The negroes had voted in the previous election in most of the county precincts. At this time many precincts were not voted in by them.

In Tarboro the few Republicans and negroes being entitled to select talismen and a challenger, appointed C. M. Dancy, a negro of considerable ability, to act for them in seeing that no fraud was perpetrated. R. O. Jeffries, a tobacco auctioneer, was "caller out." The work of counting the votes began at sundown, and the Democrats were found to have won.

The returns of the election showed that Edgecombe gave 3,781 votes for the amendment, with only 374 against; an inconceivable political possibility with as many negro votes as were in the county. Yet it was accomplished—by what political means of strategy? At Rocky Mount on the Edgecombe side, No. 12 Township gave Aycock 562 votes and 44 for Adams. Aycock received a total vote of 3,758, while Adams received only 385. One negro in the county who was witnessing the election returns exclaimed when he came out of the building that he had never heard one man's name called so many times as Aycock's was called on the night of the 2d.

The entire State and county ticket was elected by a large majority, while Edgecombe missed being the banner county by about sixty votes. Taking into consideration the large number of Republicans and Populists who had dominated the county, it won a victory that exceeded any other in the State. Dr. R. H. Speight succeeded W. L. Person in the Senate and E. L. Doughtridge and B. F. Shelton succeeded H. A. Gilliam and S. L. Hart in the House of Representatives.

The election for national officers in November, 1900, was of little interest. The negro was out of politics, while Honorable F. M. Simmons was running best in the county for Congress. Little or no organization was made since the principal issue was determined in August. Moreover, Donnell Gilliam had resigned the chairmanship in September, leaving D. B. Betts, a young Democrat, as his successor. Mr. Gilliam had been a prominent figure in politics, and received his just political reward by being elected to the State Senate in 1902 and 1904, serving two terms.

The official returns for the county in the November election were as follows: Bryan, 3,009; McKinley, 1,635; Kitchen, 3,028;



Martin, 1,621; Simmons, 1,676; and Carr, 328. Rocky Mount townships gave Simmons 316 and Carr 35. With the election of November being over and Simmons elected, it eliminated the negro from politics in Edgecombe. George H. White, the present incumbent of the United States Congress from the Second District, took himself to another locality, where he was looked upon with more favor.

The county, since 1900, has been solidly Democratic, with no attempt being made on the part of the negroes to exercise what right they had left under the constitutional amendment of August, 1900. A fact which in all probability merits commendation for them, because in no section of the State and the South is the racial feeling more harmonious. This could not be truthfully said if conditions had remained as they were prior to 1900.

One sad incident occurred during the campaign of this year—the death of Ex-Governor Elias Carr. He died July 22, 1900, just a few days previous to the election in August. He was a modest, unassuming, typical southern gentleman with a host of friends. He was a man of positive convictions and of clean character. He had filled with ability and fidelity the trust placed in his hands by the people and devoted himself to the welfare of the citizens of the State.

## CHAPTER X

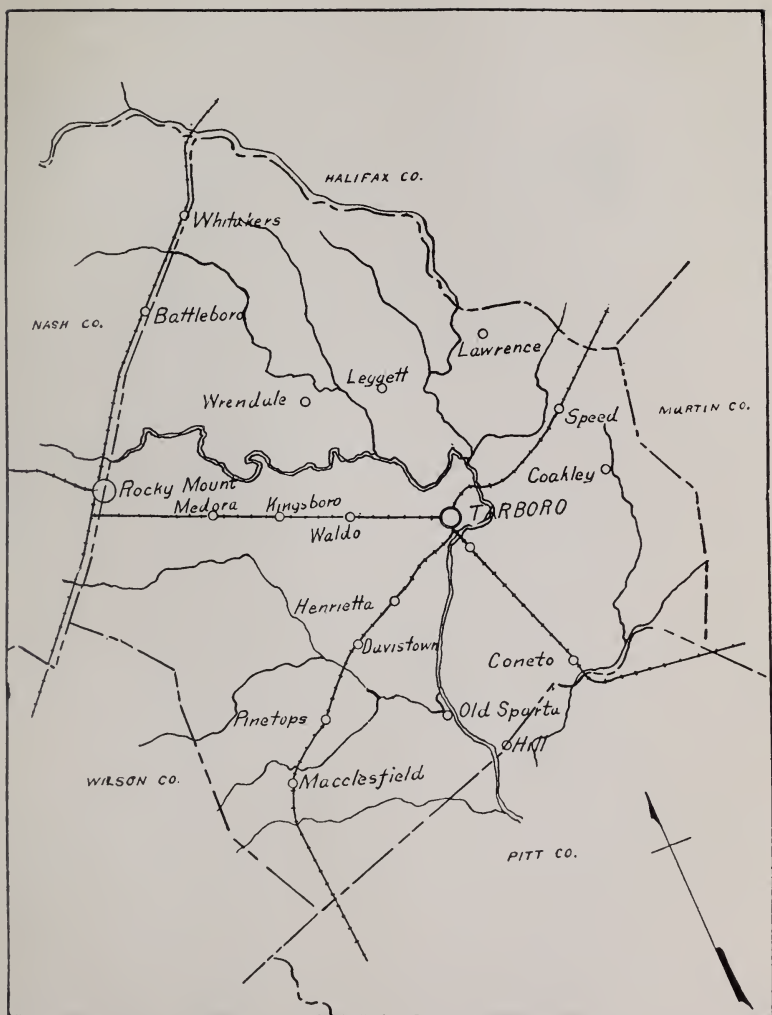
### AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRIES AND INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

It is a credit to Edgecombe that through the intelligent cultivation and development of its lands it acquired great reputation and became known far and wide as the banner section of North Carolina. The traveler in this and other states, when speaking of Edgecombe, centers his remarks around agriculture. There are reasons for this merited reputation.

Edgecombe County comprises about 515 square miles, 306,756 acres, valued in 1896 at \$1,464,396, but worth ten times as much in 1919. It has a population of nearly 40,000, seventy per cent of whom depend on agriculture. It has a climate similar to that of Southern France; topographically it is mostly level, with occasional slight elevations, and a healthy and well developed people. The temperature averages fifty-eight degrees in the spring, seventy-seven in summer, sixty-two in autumn, forty-five in winter, and has an average of sixty-one degrees. The soil is greatly diversified, ranging from the piney woods land to the rich and black swamp land bordering the creeks and rivers, being of the type of Norfolk sandy loam. Tar River is the largest stream, and rises in the western part of Granville County.

From an account written as early as 1811, it was stated that the best river land produced Indian corn, peas, wheat, oats, rye, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, cotton, and flax in abundance. The best light land also produced the same varieties of crops, but in less quantity. The valuation of lands today varies similar to that in the very earliest period.

The early settlers cultivated the virgin lands with much credit, and produced a variety of commodities that supplied the needs of the people. In fact, the early records show that production was so bountiful that a surplus was left, which was exported. The principal products that were exported to foreign markets were naval stores. England placed a bounty on this product and encouraged the colonists to make extensive preparation for the production of these commodities. The piney woods and the long leaf pine in particular were the source of a staple product. In spite of the fact that the pine afforded one of the most striking marks



GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDS OF EDGECOMBE COUNTY IN 1900





of a sterile soil, it received great consideration at the hands of the pioneer settlers; especially was this true when they were located near the Tar River, a navigable stream.

A writer from the county in 1810 declared that the pine yielded to the settlers more profit than the best lands would do by farming. Experienced men who had worked the trees before, made from 100 to 120 barrels of turpentine in a year, including the making of the barrels to hold the product. Moreover, the expense of transportation was extremely small, since the English vessels usually came up Tar River. Old trees, which had been lying on the ground long enough to lose their sap, yielded a supply of tar. This industry met with great success, and, as the account goes, "emigrants from Virginia and the northeastern counties of the State settled on the barren lands and converted the pine into meat, bread, and money."

It seems also that the land of Edgecombe in the early days yielded good crops of wheat—one of the primary essentials of life, and is capable of growing good crops at this time. The annual exports by farmers prior to 1800 averaged 150 bushels of wheat, 1,375 barrels of naval stores, 418,900 pounds of live pork, 15,600 of beef, 190 head of sheep, 20,000 pounds of bacon, and 177 barrels of corn. In addition Tarboro was continuously supplied from the county with meats of all kinds, poultry, eggs, honey, fruits, melons, roots, and dairy products. Many of the housekeepers owned their own farms near town, and grew their own supplies. The abundance of vegetables and a good increase from surplus products constituted a source of income. It was quite appropriate for one of the early ministers to say: "The people have more trade than religion, more wealth than grace." Even the merchants who had emigrated to Tarboro as paupers soon grew prosperous.

The fact that a source of wealth existed in the production of naval stores, kept the farming industry from progressing as rapidly as it would have under ordinary circumstances. In 1810 agriculture was still very crude, lands were cheap and plenty. Farmers were, therefore, enticed from one place to another instead of locating permanently and giving close attention to the development of their land. Incidents have been given in which settlers sold their plantation and moved nearer to the frontier to

reach virgin lands. In spite of this fact, the yield produced was evidence that the people were not indifferent to nor ignorant of farming. The usual method employed was the cultivation of large areas; until the exhaustion of the soil, and to then seek fresh lands. No lands were ever reclaimed, nor a diversity of crops resorted to in order to put back into the land its lost strength. Manuring, therefore, was never used. The earliest writer of this period—1800—states that a man and a horse could easily cultivate 60,000 corn hills and plow 6,000 a day. The best land, when not continuously cultivated, produced from ten to twelve and one-half bushels per 1,000 corn hills, in addition to peas and fodder. The success, however, depended on judicious plowing. The farmer's best judgment was necessary to enable him to determine how far to abandon this loose mode of culture for the purpose of manuring, as it was not well understood. The fear of more or less failure prevented many from undertaking it. There were, however, some small attempts.

Cattle raising in the pre-Revolutionary days was a natural outgrowth of conditions in the county. Very little attention was given to it, as the cattle thrived and multiplied by sustenance from natural grasses in the village common and swamp lands. An abundance of grain was produced, and much pork was fed and sold to foreign markets, being carried principally to Suffolk and Norfolk, Virginia. Much loss was caused by neglect to properly feed the cattle; shucks and corn tops being insufficient to maintain them during the winter months. During the winter they were allowed to eat from the fields and to clear the land of the stalks and vegetation, which should have gone back to the soil as a means to restore fertility. In the spring they were again turned loose in the woods and swamps, and by early fall became good beeves. Before being placed on the market or carried to the cities, they were turned in the field with peas and grass to put them in better shape.

The people, therefore, had no improved and scientific method of farming or cattle raising. While there were only a few in the county who attempted to raise clover, it was given a trial. Those who attempted this culture did not succeed well in feeding it, as they did not understand its tendency to salivate. Foreign grass also met with failure, due to the fact that native grasses were





SHEEP RANCH AND A TYPICAL COUNTRY HOME



HOG RANCH IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY



more luxuriant and choked out the foreign grass before it could seed. Moreover, the swamps were so flat that draining was impracticable and heavy rains after planting were liable to drown the crops.

While the raising of cattle was neglected, the matter of horse breeding received careful attention, as horses were used for sport. As early as 1805 some of the best and fastest racing horses on the continent were bred in this county. H. Cotton, an energetic and social sporting leader of the county at this time, was zealous of improving the breed and imported several of the best horses obtainable. The fact, however, that oxen and mules answered the purpose of the farmers better and were more easily maintained, offered scant encouragement for high bred animals, and this project was soon abandoned. Mules were used in adjacent counties to pull wagons, but strange to say Edgecombe was without wagons. The principal means of conveyance was the long shaft cart, similar to the carrylog cart of today and the forerunner of the dump cart, which until recently was used extensively in the county.

The raising of hogs was perhaps the most profitable and most widely known of any phase of farming. Pork was a more certain money product and naturally led to closer attention and greater production. Efforts were made later to improve swine so that their meat would command a good price. The farmers, however, depended upon the natural grass and wood range for the hog in summer. This generally succeeded in giving good growth. The woods abounded in oak, pine, and beech trees, the chinquapin, ground whortleberry, and moss from trees. This method, however, made little improvement for the settler in the early eighteenth century. It was less expense and less trouble, while all that was produced was that much made. The fact that pork commanded immediate cash when carried to a Virginia market, and was more easily transported by those in remote sections of the county, stimulated its greatest production. The farmers living in the vicinity of Tosnot and Contentnea depended upon pork and cattle for their entire money crop.

Tobacco which was one of the earliest crops produced in the county, is of vital interest even when compared with the recent

boom it has received. The stimulus for its production had its origin in 1750. And not unlike today the profit in its cultivation was its chief stimulus. The old story of Sir Walter Raleigh's introduction of tobacco in the European courts needs no rehearsal. The appreciation of tobacco in England created a demand which at that time fell upon the southern colonies to supply. One of the first things the early settlers did, therefore, was to realize big money from planting tobacco. In 1760, the same year Tarboro was laid out, the town commissioners met and ordered a site between Tar River and Hendrick's Creek laid off for the building of a warehouse for tobacco storage.

In 1764 the production had increased to such an extent that it became necessary to provide some means of storage until the English ships could come up Tar River from Bath. The laws of the province were shaped to make storage compulsory and a systematic procedure was soon devised. A warehouse was built on Mr. Howell's land, convenient to Tarboro. The Assembly of the Province also designated by law certain individuals to inspect the tobacco in order to prevent inferior grades being sold as prime products. The inspectors were paid by the Government, and in a sense became agents for the merchants of the mother country.

In 1766 still another warehouse was erected at Tarboro, both for storage purposes and as a convenient place for inspection and ship landing. A law providing for the storage and inspection of tobacco expired that year, having been passed tentatively. Its efficiency was established and its usefulness conclusively proved. A new law was immediately enacted to continue the inspection and to give more time for this purpose. The time of inspection at Tarboro was increased and the salaries of inspectors was placed at forty pounds.

The matter of receiving tobacco, grading the same and shipping from the county proved a successful and profitable business. Farmers made money, men with capital made money by buying up quantities for storage, until in 1784, a landing place was constructed on Tar River consisting of a structure in the nature of a wharf. The American Government during the Revolutionary War received tons of tobacco for sale, while the product acted in many instances as deferred money. Tickets were issued on tobacco

stored in warehouses, and these tickets were used as a means of exchange in the place of actual specie.

Agents were appointed during the period from 1784 and 1789 to conduct sales of tobacco stored in the various warehouses in the southern counties. J. Haywood writes from Edgecombe County in 1787 that he was preparing to hold a sale of tobacco, since Robert Stewart, the general purchasing agent, had arrived at Washington. After the sale delivery was made at Washington, the tobacco being sent down Tar River in flat boats, where it was placed in coastwise and foreign ships for transportation.

Immediately after the Revolution the culture of tobacco declined, due to the withdrawal of the English bounty and the loss of England as a market. Cotton then became the principal money crop and has had a continual and improved growth. It was due to the price of cotton, although raised in limited quantities, because of the slow and crude methods of growing and preparation for market, that land increased greatly in value after the Revolution. In 1815 Edgecombe land was valued at \$1,926,572.00, and slaves were valued at \$1,435,450.00, making an average of \$43.00 per acre for land and \$229.68 for each slave. Three years later, however, land for some cause had a rapid decline.

From 1820 to 1860 Edgecombe made great progress, while the statistics showed the county as the banner county of the State. Formerly nothing good was expected of the land, since the swamps were regarded as too flat to be drained and the forests as pine barrens. The county had capable men, but they were not classed as farmers.

There were two factors which produced the remarkable growth and activity in agriculture—agricultural organizations, and composting and marling. While organization did much good, the advance and success were due to the development and adoption of the system of thorough tillage, supplemented by compost. The word compost means a mixture, the practice of composting being of ancient origin. Evidently rediscovered in Edgecombe, for doubtlessly the farmers were not advertent to its use in England, as the early settlers never used it, but well knowing its strength and virtue, heed the advice of the wisest of poets:

“And what is to come;  
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,  
To make them ranker.”

The compost was the one thing that while assuring the growth of good crops, year by year, steadily increased the fertility of the soil. The compost was made of soil, preferably that well filled with decaying vegetation, stable manure, cotton seed and marl, spread in thin layers, and built up to a height of two to four feet, of a conical or oblong shape.

This practice laid the basis of the remarkable advance in farming, and when Peruvian guano was introduced and a liberal application of it made per acre, in addition to composting, wonderful progress was made and such fine results obtained, that in 1861 Edgecombe was the banner agricultural county in the State. During this time, by general repute, foremost in this great work were two brothers, Robert R. and John L. Bridgers, lawyers by profession, farmers by nature. The largest yield of cotton on a considerable area, 500 acres, was a crop grown about 1858 by Robert R. Bridgers on his Straban plantation, the yield being 512 bales. H. L. Staton, in the fifties, by the intelligent use of compost and marl (he had the most advanced form or apparatus for lifting the marl), the marl lying unusually deep, developed, what when he purchased it, was a most unpromising tract of land, into a farm of fine productivity, and the impress that he put upon it remains today, a striking example of the fine capacity of the Edgecombe farmers between 1850 and 1861. Sometime early in the nineteenth century an agricultural society was organized for the purpose of stimulating an interest in agriculture. The organization had an effective and useful existence for about ten years, during which time subjects pertaining to farming were discussed and modern methods of industry were introduced.

In 1850 the society was reorganized and highly commended by the *Norfolk Daily News*. The Agricultural Society celebrated its first anniversary in 1851 by the delivery of an address by John L. Bridgers, who by his industry, perseverance, and talents was among the foremost in this work. Edmond Ruffin, of Virginia, also took an active part in this work for several years.

Under the guidance of this society, composed of the best farmers of the county, great good resulted in this section of the State. In a few years Edgecombe and Tarboro began a bright career and enjoyed prosperity and contentment. James Philips, an able chemist, was the first to introduce scientific methods of farming



in the county. In 1852 he delivered an address before the Agricultural Society, which was later published in the *Farmers Journal*. In his address Dr. Philips gave an exposition of analytical chemistry as applied to farming. His ideas were later adopted with much profit.

Edgecombe also profited by the assistance of Professor Emmons, State Geologist, who made frequent addresses before the Agricultural Society. In coöperation with the late Governors H. T. Clark and Elias Carr, and R. R. Bridgers, and John L. Bridgers, the use of marl was made known. These men began the use of marl about the year 1845. Commercial fertilizers were then practically unknown.

In 1852 Professor Emmons made a chemical analysis of marl in Edgecombe on Beaver Dam Creek, White Acre, Shilo Marl beds, the yellow marl at Bells Bridge and at the farm of D. W. Bullock. From the examination the various ingredients were determined and recommendations for use were made. For ten years following the first examination no class of material was more frequently analyzed in the chemist's laboratory. It soon became apparent that no practice was found of greater value to agriculture than the use of marl in growing crops, especially cotton.

The use of marl became common in the county and production became greater in 1858 by the invention of a digger by Thomas F. Christman, of Salem, N. C.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Christman was at that time a resident of Wilson, N. C. He had realized the necessity of some machinery to produce greater quantities. The implement was constructed, accordingly, for the purpose of raising marl from its bed or stratum, and resembled the derrick now used for heavy lifting. The machine worked well and did all that Christman claimed. The machine was successfully operated in Wilson County by Robert Bynum. The machine had a capacity of 1,500 bushels of marl an hour with eight laborers. A trial of the marl digger was also made on Swift Creek in the neighborhood of

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<sup>1</sup> The practical use of such a machine was first pointed out by Dr. John R. Mercer, of Edgecombe County. The idea was suggested to Mr. Christman, who perfected the plan.

Messrs. Gorham, Whitehead, Powell, Braswell, and Cherry. More than eighty farmers were present from various sections of the county.

Under the auspices of the Agricultural Society, marling was urged with good results. In 1845 the amount of cotton produced in the county was 1,500 bales, while in 1850 by the use of marling the county produced 6,000 bales, an astonishing increase in five years. All the crops improved in the same ratio. The farmers also resorted to every available means of improving their lands. They gave attention to liming, to land plaster, and to composts of every description. This method of agricultural interest was so noticeable that a traveler through Edgecombe in 1850 wrote that pile after pile of manure had been carted in the fields, and covered with dirt to check evaporation until the proper time to plant the spring crops. A great change had come over this industry by the use of books—agricultural books—while Edward Ruffin, H. T. Clark, Elias Carr, R. R. and John L. Bridgers, Jesse Mercer, and others have the honor of producing a remarkable successful era in the history of agriculture in the county.

The effective use of marl and the growth of agriculture attracted much attention in the State. In 1853 a delegation of farmers, consisting of Messrs. Whitehead, Bryan, and Briggs, came from Southampton, Virginia, to inspect the new methods of farming. These gentlemen were shown over Panola,<sup>1</sup> the experimental farm, belonging to Messrs. Norfleet and Dancy. They also saw the experiments made at the farm of Baker Staton. Visits were made in the Town Creek region, stopping at the various large farms.

Edgecombe prided itself on its agricultural display, and visitors came, saw, and profited. Some comparative figures are necessary to show the increased production. In 1850 the county produced 2,445,000 pounds of cotton, 715,665 bushels of corn, 27,280 bushels of oats, and 14,295 bushels of wheat. Land formerly quite poor, but under the use of marl produced in 1852, 1,200 pounds of seed cotton to the acre, and one farmer in Town Creek section aver-

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<sup>1</sup> Panola is an Indian name meaning cotton. The farm was purchased from Mr. John S. Dancy by Theophilus Parker for \$14,000.00 for an experimental farm.





COTTON SCREW, 1860



IN THE COTTON FIELD, 1860



aged over a bale of 400 pounds to the acre. This was due to compost and use of marl.

The advancement made showed conclusively that it was profitable to read and study conditions. Below is a comparative statement of D. W. Bullock's improvement in three years, using the same number of hands and the same acreage. In 1849 Mr. Bullock produced 50 bales of cotton, employing 18 to 20 hands, mostly women and children. In 1850 he raised 61 bales of cotton, while in 1851 he produced 98 bales, almost doubling his production in three years. This instance is typical of almost every farmer who began the study and use of modern methods. Experiments were begun about 1853 with Peruvian guano and subsoiling, which proved very effective.

During the course of the war between the states agriculture declined, due to attention being given to military affairs. The farmers, however, upon returning to their homes, began to repair waste places. They met with serious setbacks, due to low prices of every commodity and with a fluctuation of currency. Pork sold for six cents a pound, and other commodities at similar prices. Men were badly in debt; radical rule was oppressive, and the farmers were unable to raise money to finance crops or to pay mortgages upon their lands.<sup>1</sup> Many farmers lost their farms on a mere \$300.00 mortgage. Some of these farms have recently sold for \$40,000.00.

In addition the labor problem became alarming, due to the fact that the negro had received his freedom and appeared disinclined to work for his former master. Moreover, many were leaving the county in a state of unrest and apparent discontent. The action of the Federal Government in freeing the negro made labor very unsettled, deadened industry, and caused agriculture for a time to decline. Negroes refused to work for \$15.00 per month and rations under a manager. They expressed desire, however, to farm on shares when they could do so without an overseer. On the other hand, they preferred to work for wages without a manager, than on shares with one. Up to January 1, 1867, only two farmers in the county had secured help for the

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<sup>1</sup> The passage of the lien law in 1866 changed Edgecombe from an exporter to an importer.

year. The general idea prevailed among the negroes that something would soon happen in their behalf.

Moreover, negro labor became unsatisfactory because of the lack of dependence to be placed in it. It was not unusual to make a contract and then break it, or else have it revised by the Freedman's Bureau. Negroes would invariably break labor contracts and liked better to "work around," as they termed it, than to work steady.

The labor condition, however, proved useful in that it caused many white people to begin working their own lands. It made the white farmer work, read, and think. There had never been greater activity on the part of the land owner than that which followed the war. The Agricultural Society had almost ceased to exist and did not have a reawakening until about 1869.

In spite of these difficulties Edgecombe, in 1869, produced 18,000 bales of cotton, and a good crop of corn and wheat. The system of underground drainage by tiles for the flat land was adopted to some extent about this time, instead of ditching. Thoroughness of culture and neatness around the farmhouses and outbuildings showed growing interest.

The county possessed men of faith and ability to restore agriculture again on a sound basis. Many of these men—R. R. Bridgers, John L. Bridgers, Jesse Mercer, A. J. Cotten, Elisha Cromwell, and others—owned many acres, and were men of capacity. Elisha Cromwell was the first successful planter of cotton in the county. He began with a few acres. He was born in 1823 at the home of his father, Elisha Cromwell, who then lived in Edgecombe, having been one of the early settlers in the county. He farmed on a large scale, owning a hospital for the care of his many slaves. He sent Dink Hammond's<sup>1</sup> father, Wiley, to Richmond to learn the blacksmith's trade and established his own blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, tin shop on his plantation. Mr. Cromwell was consulted by many of the farmers as to the method of cotton culture. He also began the two-crop-a-year system by which one piece of land would be planted in cotton or corn in the spring and harvested in time to be planted in oats, peas, or some soil building crop. In this manner a diversified crop was commenced, allowing the land to regain its fertility.

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<sup>1</sup> A blacksmith in Tarboro today.

The county, beginning with 1867, began to revive, and the production of cotton for this year was 15,000 bales. The county, while it had considerable labor to leave, received many laborers from Nash and Halifax counties, thereby causing farm operation to increase. In addition inducements were offered immigrants to make the county their home. In July, 1869, Tarboro received twenty-eight Swiss immigrants who had been induced by a Mr. Atkinson to come to Edgecombe. These men were soon placed on the farms of Messrs. John Staton, John W. Pippin, William Pippin, and Mrs. Foxhall. They did good work, and offered a more reliable source of farm labor than the emancipated negro.

In 1869 the Agricultural Society began to emerge from the effects of the war. It began to publish a monthly magazine at Tarboro known as the *Reconstructed Farmer*. James R. Thigpen and John S. Dancy were its editors and proprietors. The purpose of the magazine was to discuss matters pertaining to farming and farm life. Among some of the subjects presented to the people were ditching and manuring, growing hogs, how to destroy the tobacco fly, tobacco culture, cultivation of cotton, and strawberry culture.

Agricultural interests were also aroused in the holding of fairs, which exhibited displays of farm products. The year 1868 marked the beginning of Edgecombe fairs, which, except for a few intermittent years, have been held in the county ever since. Tarboro, since about 1800, had been noted for its racing. In 1837 Tarboro had organized what was known as the "Tarboro Jockey Club," and had more than thirty-eight articles of regulation specifying the various official starters and defining the procedure of the course of races. There had been a few men in almost every decade of the county's history who possessed the sporting spirit, and racing was more or less practiced for these 180 years.

The first fair, consisting of an agricultural display, racing, and other features necessary for a successful fair, was held near McKendree Church, near Cokey's Swamp, in 1873. In 1875 Dr. A. B. Nobles, an enterprising farmer, supported the fair and managed to keep the annual exhibits at this place. The fair, however, was soon transferred to Rocky Mount. The interest soon died and the fair went out of existence, to be revived in Tarboro about 1881. At Tarboro the fair lived about three years, when

Dr. Pittman began to support the movement by giving financial aid and establishing the premium idea for the best exhibit. The fair made money for a few years, and at last ceased to exist.

Tobacco, which had suffered a setback for several years, again came to the front about 1868. It had several years' prosperity, warehouses were erected, and places for storage constructed. About 1880, however, the large farmers on Tar River lost interest and preferred to plant cotton, which had increased in price. Tobacco culture was again revived about 1890, when cotton declined in price, and Tarboro soon possessed one of the best tobacco markets in Eastern North Carolina. Large prize warehouses were erected. R. O. Jeffreys came from Virginia and conducted a large warehouse for several years. The growth of tobacco was again discouraged about 1895, but was again revived in 1917.

The fluctuation of the growth of tobacco was caused by two reasons: soil conditions and labor, and the change in prices. Moreover, in all successful enterprises there must be a coming together or a harmonious coöperation in order to be successful. For a successful tobacco market the merchants, the farmers, and the tobacco buyers must meet and make provision for the storage of the tobacco and keeping active the tobacco interest. Such has not been the history of the tobacco market at Tarboro.

Cotton, which had been a staple product of the county for many years, had its worst reverse immediately after 1865. Much of the cotton produced just before and during the war had been destroyed by Federal troops and by the Confederate Government in order to prevent the North's securing same. At the termination of the war, therefore, there was great scarcity. The fact, however, that the United States Government placed a heavy tax upon cotton discouraged many planters. The Government tax was three cents per pound, causing a bale of cotton weighing 500 pounds to cost the farmer \$15.00. It is obvious that the southern farmer was robbed to enrich the North.

After 1880, however, conditions became more normal and cotton reached a safe basis for production. Land conditions improved and cotton was produced in great quantities. A. B. Nobles produced 71,505 pounds of seed cotton, or sixty-five bales on fifty-



two acres in 1882. He accomplished this by composting and manuring. Other farmers produced cotton and other crops in proportion.

About this time new agricultural societies were organized. Among them were the Farmer's Institute, with Elias Carr as president and Frank Powell, secretary, and the Gridiron Club, which discussed issues relative to the duties and rights of land owners, comparative conditions of the people, the farmer's margin of profit, things that effect the farmer, and other vital subjects. The late Judge Howard, R. H. Speight, B. B. Howell, W. P. Mercer, N. J. Mayo, J. J. Pittman, and others were active in the work. The Grange movement also supported this phase of farm endeavor, and W. R. Williams, grand master of the States Grange, and H. B. Battle appeared frequently in Edgecombe and advocated stock raising. Application of chemistry to agriculture took deeper hold, and a movement was made by W. R. Cox to have the county commissioners appoint students to attend the Agricultural College at Raleigh, who should pledge themselves to return to the county and engage in farming.

The Farmers Institute began to teach farming subjects, such as truck farming, tobacco and tobacco curing, proper forage crops and methods of curing, and the best methods of preparing land. Cotton culture and market conditions were also taught, and the idea of stock raising advanced. Tarboro also organized a Progressive Association, with L. L. Staton as president, to take an interest in town and county matters. A building known as the Farmers' Institute Building was used for meetings and consultations.

It was due to the various organizations that stock raising revived in 1887. For agriculture and stock raising the climatic advantages and the facilities in Edgecombe are unequalled. Gama grass as early as 1830 was used by William Foxhall. The valuable quality of this grass was developed, and was eagerly sought and transplanted in many places in the county. Along the Tar River and water courses the grass was cultivated with success. The farmers soon began to discover this fact, and began to raise cattle for a financial profit. In 1887 Judge Howard purchased a number of cows and began raising stock at the old Hall Farm. J. W. Jones also put in a large stock farm at his place six miles from

Tarboro. The Shilo Stock Farm also bought fifty-seven cows of pure stock, while T. H. Gatlin and James Ruffin began the stock business on the Wimberly place.

In 1889 L. L. Staton began to raise pure bred horses at the Shilo Farm. These horses were exhibited at fairs at Tarboro and Fayetteville. He raised colts two and three years old that won nine-tenths of the races during the season of 1889 and 1890. The idea grew until most all farmers were raising stock, while race horses in the county became no longer a luxury. The industry grew until a Live Stock Association was formed in December, 1890, with L. L. Staton as temporary president, A. L. Hussey, secretary, and George Howard, Jr., as treasurer. In recent years George Holderness and Ben Shelton have succeeded in perfecting the stock industry and have become large shippers of cattle. The Live Stock Association was enlarged upon and Stock Feeders' Association survived the early organization. Animals and animal diseases were studied from a commercial viewpoint. Hogs and their diseases were given attention, until the county ranks among the first in the stock business. Considerable attention was given to the production of grasses and clover. Alfalfa, to a large extent, was cultivated and forage was produced in abundance.

The development of stock raising was the logical outcome of the labor conditions and intellectual growth among the farmers. Economic stress from 1886 to 1905 brought heavy pressure to bear upon the farmers. Labor agents were everywhere in the county, causing the farm help to leave. Attempts were made to prevent this both by a law which laid a heavy tax on agents, and by importation of the Portuguese negro. W. A. Hart, John Shackelford, and W. D. Pender tried the imported negro labor, but it proved uncessful. The negro did not understand farm work. The stringent law against labor agents proved more effective.

From a general survey of farming industry in the last fifty years the conditions indicate that more thought and energy were devoted to the work. Agricultural test farms have been introduced and knowledge gained by experiments has been disseminated among the agricultural class. Seed selections improved, better modes of cultivation and fertilization have come. Where only



TYPE OF COTTON GIN IN 1890



TYPICAL STOCK FARM









MODERN COTTON GIN

one-half and one bale of cotton had formerly been produced to the acre, one and two bales were raised. Ideal farms and farm living supplanted the crude idea of agriculture. Improvement of fields, houses, and stock pens were noticeable throughout the county. Men who had moved to Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana returned to their native county, and paid handsome prices for the land that had sold for a mere pittance sixty years ago. Modern machinery answered the needs of production and the people proved ready to adopt new ideas. The new cotton gin was perhaps the greatest asset in increasing production. Where the county made 5,000 bales of cotton prior to the introduction of the new gin it increased to about 30,000 bales in more recent times. It is interesting to note that the county in 1881 had 51,880 acres in cotton and produced 26,250 bales.

Considerable attention has been devoted to the industry of farming. The county, however, although chiefly agricultural, has made rapid progress in other industries. The beginning of manufacturing dates with the arrival of the early settlers. The lack of manufacturing on a commercial scale led the settlers to make their own cloth, shoes, and hats. In 1800 the county had 923 looms and spinning wheels, and made 250,000 yards of cloth annually. In addition there were three hatters' shops, two coopers' shops and numerous carriage and joiner shops. As early as 1787 a snuff factory was erected in Tarboro. The factory must have been a small enterprise, and all the work was done by hand and in a slow manner. There were also numerous grist mills in the colonial days. The Tarboro commissioners in 1789 granted permission for a grist mill to be erected on Hendrick Creek. There are signs of old grist mills to be seen today. The Peter Hines Grist Mill, built in 1772, is visible today, in that an old millstone is still there. On Hendricks Creek several old logs, posts, and an old millstone indicate the former existence of a grist mill. On Buck Swamp, at the old plantation of Newit Pittman, Moses Horn built a mill in 1774. Will Barnes built his mill in 1775 on Stoney Creek, while the old Isaac Sessum mill was erected in 1775 on Fishing Creek.

In the colonial period something like the guild system of England existed in the county. All blacksmiths and carpenters served their trade, being apprenticed to some expert mechanic.

The various wood built houses in the county were constructed on this plan. Almost every crossroad had a blacksmith and carpenter shop.

There were also in 1810, 159 distilleries, making 39,000 gallons of peach and apple brandy each year; 439 tanneries, using 1,964 hides annually; 31 blacksmith shops; 4 hatters' shops; 3 carriage shops, and 29 cotton machines. The county was covered almost with saw machines, some run by horses, hand, and water. Several corn-shelling machines were operated successfully and profitably in the county as early as 1800. Wheat fans were not infrequent, and were operated at a rental cost of \$1.00 per day.

It may also prove interesting to know that some gold mining was done in the county at a very early date. On Cokey Swamp, near the farms of Dancy and Griffin, signs were discovered in 1794 of a large pit and tools, where ore had been taken out of the ground. A. I. D. Sturdivant, who rented this farm in 1794, discovered the signs through a slave, and went to the place in the swamp. Here he found a mattock and some other mining instruments and dug only a short time before finding some clean pieces of gold. The ore was in large lumps of different sizes, some of yellow and others of white colors and very heavy. The vein appeared not more than three feet in diameter, and was surrounded by rotten wood, indicating a shaft. Ore was found inside the bark of the rotten logs. In 1834 Mr. Sturdivant moved to Tennessee and gave the information to the late Judge Howard's father. It was afterward discovered that the negro, owned by a Mr. Williams in the county, who was killed at Kings Mountain during the Revolution, was working with a man believed to have been a British deserter, and who had been employed by Mr. Williams to get out the ore. The Englishman seems to have been a miner named Jackson, who worked in a shop and made large quantities of money and dug ore on the bank of Tar River. It was carried about three miles to a shop, where there was a small furnace to reduce the ore. Jackson absconded and took all the money with him, leaving the tools in the mine. Some credence was given the story, and tools were found in a decayed condition in 1834.

One of the early pioneers in commerce in Edgecombe was one Mr. Watson. He was one of the largest merchants of New Eng-



land, and began business with John Brown, founder of Brown University. Mr. Watson began prospecting in Eastern North Carolina in 1777, and at the age of nineteen was handling sums for investment amounting to \$50,000.00. He visited Edgecombe in 1777, prospecting and reporting conditions favorable according to the times and conditions.

As early as 1805 Edgecombe felt a new awakening for manufacturing, which began on a small basis. It is clear that in that year a varnish factory was erected in the county. In 1811 a deed was recorded in Tarboro courthouse signifying that in addition to many other merchandises, sixty-five barrels of varnish were shipped to Baltimore in care of Captain Davidson. Moreover, twenty-six barrels of varnish and thirty barrels of rosin were shipped to Town Creek. At the same time the tools and instruments of a turpentine distillery with a capacity of twenty barrels a day, and all tools of a lampblack factory, and twenty barrels of lampblack were sold at a sale at Tarboro. Jonas Bell became the owner by purchase, and it is reasonable to believe that the turpentine distillery, varnish factory, and lampblack factory were continued in operation.

In 1847 Tarboro had a considerable boom from the turpentine industry. Four years prior to this time not more than 1,000 barrels annually were produced in Edgecombe. In 1847 one large distillery was in operation, producing more than 300 barrels daily, while the quantity of turpentine timber soon made possible the erection of more distilleries.

In 1833 the study of the cotton industry resulted in the invention of a machine to separate the kernals from the lint of the hulls, which absorbed the oil and prevented a complete extraction. The machine was invented by Lancelot Johnson, then a resident of Edgecombe County. The oil extracted was used in lamps and served the purpose of kerosene oil. The result of this invention was the erection of machines at Tarboro and other localities in the county. A great revival occurred in the production of cotton and cotton manufacture.

About this time agricultural works were erected in Tarboro, where the Edgecombe Iron Works now stands. Mr. Hines, of Wilson, N. C., first began the enterprise and later the late Judge Howard's father supported the project as a partner. The struc-

ture at first was made of wood and when Mr. Howard became a partner a large brick building was erected. The plant made plows, castings, and repaired agricultural machinery of all descriptions.

Early in 1828 a movement began to organize the Edgecombe Manufacturing Company. Joel Battle became the nominal president. Registration books were opened by the county commissioners in March, 1829, for the subscription of stock. Several hundred dollars were secured. Through public subscription and private capital enough was furnished to erect one of the greatest enterprises ever undertaken in this part of the State. The plant was located at the Big Falls of Tar River, where an abundant water power made possible the use of a large quantity of machinery. A stone structure about seventy-six feet long by thirty feet wide with four floors was erected. The mill at first had 2,000 spindles, with a large wooden building annexed for the accommodation either for spinning or weaving. Attached to the factory was also a large grist and saw mill, two store houses, a large dwelling and other necessary buildings. The mill was bought in 1829 by a joint stock company.

This was one of the early factories of its kind to be established in the South. The erection was almost immediately after the inventions for cotton pressing. On September 1, 1827, Lewis Laysaid, a minister, invented a machine to press 300 to 380 pounds of cotton into two breadths of forty-two inches, the bagging being four feet six inches long. The work was accomplished with considerable ease and in a short time. The press was worked by a lever acting on a fulcrum driving the headpiece, which pressed the cotton into the bale. It appeared that the press was accepted in the county about 1828. Many mechanics in the county examined the invention and pronounced it good.

There is some dispute over the erection of another factory at the Falls of Tar River. It has been stated that the factory was projected by Henry A. Donalson, and that the corner stone was laid in 1816. The building was constructed in 1817, under the immediate direction of Mr. Donelson, and under the proprietorship of Joel Battle, Benjamin D. Battle, Henry A. Donelson, and Peter Evans. The factory was operated, as is now known, by Joel Battle until 1848, when it passed into the hands of James S. and

William S. Battle, who refitted it with new machinery. In 1858 William S. Battle became sole proprietor. In 1863 Federal cavalry burned the factory and grist mill. Mr. Battle, with a true spirit of enterprise, commenced to rebuild in 1866, and completed in 1867, a splendid brick building on the old site. The new building was also of four stories, the basement was used for looms, the first story for carding, the second for spinning, and the third for reels in which the "dressing" was also provided. The factory, as it was rebuilt, contained thirty-eight looms, 1,600 spindles and all necessary adjuncts. In full operation it had the capacity of using 700 pounds of raw cotton per day, and the looms turned out about 1,200 yards of shirting and 500 pounds of cotton yarn. Fifty operators were daily employed.

One of the possible means for aiding agriculture and business in Edgecombe was the establishment of a bank. The exact date of the first bank is not known, but in all probability it was before 1815. It is to be inferred that one did not exist in 1811, since Jeremiah Battle in writing of Edgecombe at this time does not mention the operation of any bank in the county. On the other hand, there was in the county a large bank vault as early as 1818. Bennett Barrow, who must have been the owner, sold to Weeks C. Hadley a certain lot, one of the original lots, No. 80, in the Howell tract, with all the improvements on said lot, "except a large vault to the bank," which he had recently sold the E. C. Guion and Company. This vault was evidently not the one located in the old brick bank building on Trade Street. This vault was probably the property of some private citizen who operated a bank in the county for several years. The *Tarboro Southerner* makes mention of Peter P. Lawrence being the cashier of the Bank of Tarboro for thirty-four years. This was in 1853, thus placing Mr. Lawrence's activities as early as 1809.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that when the branch of the State bank was located in Tarboro about 1830 the private bank ceased to exist, and that Mr. Lawrence became cashier of this bank. R. R. Bridgers was for several years the president of the State bank; at one time James Weddell was president. In 1834 a report was current that Tarboro was to have a new bank, and the official returns to the town commissioners showed the bank had \$60,200.00 from subscriptions. It could not

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<sup>1</sup> Accepting this theory the operating of a bank would begin earlier than this, for Mr. Hadly preceeded Mr. Lawrence as cashier.

have been, however, that Tarboro had two banks, since in 1830 the official report showed one "State Branch Bank," and in 1850 it still had only one.

In 1855 the Bank of Tarboro showed a thriving business, and had a credit of \$57,048.00. Its resources in 1856 was \$16,380.00, with its resources and business increasing annually. In spite of the service that a bank was supposed and did give, the State bank had always been unpopular in Edgecombe. The Republicans and the people generally fought it for four years. When T. H. Hall, of Edgecombe, announced himself as a candidate for Congress in 1839 it drew a notice from the Republicans, who shouted, "To arms, Republicans, to arms. The war is begun. We have at length the great pleasure of displaying the broad Republican banner, inscribed with the name of that stern and consistent Democrat, Dr. Thomas H. Hall."

The whole issue was that Dr. Hall, a Democrat, had turned Republican to beat the bank law. The Democrats were weak, and it was strongly desired to keep the Federalists, who were for a National Bank, from controlling the Government, whereas the Republicans were strong for a national treasury. However, under the leadership of North Carolina politicians, the State Bank gained rapidly in the popular mind, and in 1830 a branch bank was established at Tarboro. This bank was eventually followed by the Pamlico Bank in 1875. The late George Howard was its first president and John S. Dancy its first vice-president. The late Fred Philips succeeded Mr. Howard as president, while H. L. Staton, the third president remained in this office for several years. Matthew Weddell was the first cashier of this bank, and remained as such for some time. Theophilus P. Cheshire was for many years the cashier.

In 1853 the mechanical interest aroused considerable attention among the wide-awake people of the county. The movement began under the energy and direction of F. L. Bond, a prominent merchant at Tarboro. In 1853 he erected the first and only furniture factory in Edgecombe. His business was a pronounced success, and he was jocularly known as the "Furniture Champion." He conducted a business similar to wholesalers, packing and shipping furniture to all parts of this and adjoining counties. It was his desire to give Edgecombe a reputation for manufactur-



ing. About 1854 Mr. Bond introduced steam into his factory. He went North in the fall of 1854 and secured a large stock of materials, and was successful in enlarging his plant with new equipment and with steam power. The furniture he made was of fine quality, and there is, at this time, many pieces of it in the county.

Soon after the war manufacturing in the county received an impetus toward further development. In 1870 there were in the county a number of mills, valued as follows: Thirteen steam mills, four water mills, employing 235 laborers, had a capital of \$139,225.00, paid \$43,696.00 in wages, used \$145,934.00 worth of raw materials and turned out products valued at \$267,762.00. In addition there were three carriage and wagon shops, one large cotton factory, five flour mills, and seven saw mills. These industries employed 173 laborers, paid \$30,156.00 in annual wages, used \$116,712.00 in raw materials, and turned out \$220,727.00 finished products, and had an investment of \$107,170.00.

About 1870 an organization known as the Progressive Association was formed by John L. Bridgers and others. This organization at its formation advocated reforms and suggested important movements for the growth of the county's industries. It began the movement for the erection of the Tarboro Cotton Mills, which were established in 1888. O. C. Farrer was president and a Mr. Allen superintendent. The mill, for several months, proved a failure, due to inefficient and untrained labor. Friction was not infrequent between officials and employees, and Mr. Allen, a very capable and efficient man, became the victim of jealousy on the part of the employees. He lost his position in four months, being succeeded by A. M. Failey. The mill was enlarged after a few years of operation, a new factory being built adjacent to the old one. May 1, 1899, both mills closed a contract for new machinery for \$95,000.00, making an entire new equipment. The operation of the mills, beginning with 1910, was more or less irregular, and the property decreased in valuation. In recent years the mills passed into the hands of W. A. Hart, and have had a continuous and profitable operation. An argument for mills to increase the price of cotton was inaugurated. The Progressive Association, under the wise leadership of Tarboro citizens, advocated the erection of cotton mills to manufacture the cotton produced in the

county in order that better prices might prevail. In 1899 cotton sold for five or six cents. Since the tobacco invasion of the nineties the cotton crops had fallen to 20,000 bales, and was worth only \$600,000.00. As a manufactured product the cotton was worth \$2,400,000.00 a profit for manufacturing of \$1,800,000.00 on a \$600,000.00 crop. This made a bale of cotton, which brought \$30.00 as an unfinished product, bring about \$120.00 when made in cloth and yarn.

This situation was discussed by the leading citizens. The purpose was to solicit subscriptions to form a stock company with a capital of \$150,000.00 for the construction of the Fountain Cotton Mill, in 1899. W. E. Fountain, for several years active in Edgecombe affairs, realized the advantage of buying the cotton in the county or buying elsewhere if need be. As a result of this purpose a new mill, employing many operatives, began the manufacture of cotton products in 1900.

In the meantime, John L. Bridgers, Jr., who was active in the county's promotion, became chairman of an organization to secure a peanut factory for Tarboro in 1899. The county was becoming a peanut producer and was in need of a home market. An effort was carried on by Mr. Bridgers, W. E. Fountain, and others, showing the benefit the farmers would derive from the operation of a home plant.

About this time also John Shackleford began the erection of the River View Knitting Mills. It had about one-tenth the capital of the Tarboro Cotton Mills and employed about as many operatives. In 1890 the capacity of this mill was increased fifty per cent and became a great asset in the industrial life of Edgecombe. After several years of successful, prosperous operation the mill was destroyed by fire.

The Tarboro Board of Trade, organized in June, 1895, was a useful factor in its efforts to aid agriculture and to develop the county. W. E. Fountain was president and F. S. Royster vice-president, Henry Morris second vice-president, C. W. Jeffries secretary, John L. Shackleford, T. H. Gatlin, George Howard, Jr., L. L. Staton, S. S. Nash, J. M. Barbee, R. H. Parker, J. R. Pender, E. V. Zoeller, directors. This organization promoted all

industries, and sent men through the eastern counties of the State to advertise Tarboro's tobacco market and manufacturing establishments.

Probably at no time since the war did Tarboro have such inducements as were presented during this period. The merchants were doing splendid business, having purchased goods to the amount of \$400,000.00 for six months ending 1891. This was unprecedented in the town's history, and indicated that trade was increasing. Men embarked in greater mercantile undertakings and increased the capital invested in existing firms. Scarcely a house could be rented, especially a business house. Capitalists were investing in real estate and buildings. Tarboro and Rocky Mount began to make improvements in town and city administration and conveniences. The State Legislature authorized an issue of bonds for water, sewerage, and lights in 1899. A board of public works was erected in Tarboro, consisting of George Howard, D. Litchenstein, Fred Philips, A. M. Failey, W. E. Fountain, J. H. Baker, and R. H. Gatlin. Under the board's direction and after the bond issues of \$40,000.00, T. H. Gatlin and E. P. Meridith, of Winston, began the survey of the town preliminary to the installation of water mains and sewers. Rocky Mount the same year began its work on improvements, having voted a bond issue of \$49,000.00. More than nine and one-half miles of piping was laid.

Movements were inaugurated for the erection of public buildings and in the course of ten years, from 1885 to 1895, the county erected a county home of credibility, a splendid courthouse, enlarged the jail, and constructed a city hall. The city hall built in 1886 was unfortunately subjected to quite a squabble, which resulted in its site being twice paid for by the town.

Under the continuous and profitable development of agriculture the small neighboring towns began to grow. Conetoe, under the wise investment of capital by Claude Wilson and N. B. Dawson, began to erect in 1899 a \$10,000.00 plant to make truck packages and to gin cotton. Conetoe was at the time in the center of the trucking belt. Cotton gins of the modern pattern were erected in various parts of the county in Tarboro, Battleboro, Whitakers, and Rocky Mount.

In the meantime at Rocky Mount, on the Edgecombe side, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company erected very extensive shops.<sup>1</sup> Macelesfield, Pinetops, and other villages soon began to take on the appearance of thriving centers. Banks were established at various places, giving impetus to industries and farming.

F. S. Royster, an adopted son of Edgecombe, erected the first factory for the manufacture of fertilizer in Tarboro, and from this beginning has become one of the leaders of that industry in the South. In 1900 there were more than five oil and fertilizer mills in the county.

Parallel with the growth of the industries in the county was that of the development of internal improvements. In the very early days the county was generally at a disadvantage for the want of good roads, railroads, and waterways. The means of conveyance was by stage and wagon trails. The condition was more or less improved by the Colonial Assembly, which passed acts relating to Edgecombe for the improvement of dirt roads. Bridges were also built by acts of legislation. Stages were used as a means of passenger transportation, and for carrying mail. As late as 1850 stages were run from Tarboro to Petersburg, Va., leaving the former place every Tuesday and Friday, and arriving at the latter place on Thursday and Saturday. A mail stage was also operated twice a week between Tarboro and Newbern. Mails were carried by a four-horse stage running from Petersburg to Enfield, to Tarboro and Rocky Mount three times a week, and intersecting the Norfolk and Fayetteville mail route, where mails were exchanged. In this manner mails were also forwarded to Washington City by way of Petersburg and Richmond. Passengers passed one night at Halifax, two nights at Petersburg, and on the third boarded a steamboat at Fredericksburg for Washington. The fare in those days was \$17.00 one way. Stages were also operated between Raleigh and Tarboro, and Nashville. It was over these routes that the cotton and other products of Edgecombe found their way on wagons to markets in Virginia. More than 3,000 bales of cotton passed through Tarboro each year for Norfolk and Petersburg. In 1830 the Virginia Transport Company was organized and ran wagon trains through the eastern

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<sup>1</sup> Doubtlessly the high standing of Edgecombe and its prosperous and growing agriculture had much to do with the selection of this location.







EDGECOMBE HAS MORE THAN FORTY CONCRETE BRIDGES



AN OLD ROAD AND THE NEW

counties. This company also operated two steamboats—the *Petersburg* of 142 tons and the *North Carolina* of seventy tons—upon Tar River. When the water was low, flats were used to carry the cotton to Washington, N. C., for reloading on the steamers.

The operation of these stages connected the county with the outside world, but progress was slow. Road conditions were soon improved by the making of plank roads. David Barlow was the first overseer of improved roads. The stage making regular trips from Williamston connecting with the boat line at Plymouth was the first to be improved within Edgecombe. If one wished to go from Baltimore to Tarboro, the journey was made to Williamston by stage and from there to Plymouth, where a boat was operated to Edenton. The stage then carried the passenger to Elizabeth City. And there the passenger took a boat for Norfolk and thence to Baltimore.

The plank road building began about 1800 and this method was used for improvement as late as 1850. The use of plank roads was in evidence until recent times. In 1853 stock was subscribed for what was then known as the Tarboro and Rocky Mount plank road. The amount subscribed for building during this year was \$20,000.00. In 1852 H. T. Clark advocated in the State Senate the building of a plank road from Tarboro to Jamesville, and succeeded in obtaining an appropriation for this purpose. In 1854 road building and better roads was well under way in Edgecombe and adjoining counties. Roads from Tarboro to Wilmington, Rocky Mount, Enfield, and Wilson were laid off and supported by taxation. A writer in 1845 gave credit to the county for being out of debt and keeping roads and bridges in good repair.

In recent years the county advanced a step for making better roads and bridge building. More than \$140,000.00 in bonds were issued to construct better roads and bridges. The county, as a result of this movement, have more than forty concrete bridges and many miles of good roads which reflects credit upon the progress made in the county.

Water transportation has for many years been of great importance to the county and its industries. In the colonial period English vessels came up the Tar River to trade with the early

settlers, took their tobacco and naval stores, and brought them the necessities of life. The Colonial Legislature appropriated various sums of money to keep the channels open for safe navigation. Almost every other year the river was cleared from falling trees and other obstructions. In 1796 an act was passed to clean and improve the river from Tarboro to the mouth of Fishing Creek for better navigation. In the course of four years Fishing Creek was opened by act of law, and this tributary of the Tar offered, to some extent, advantages for transportation.

The Tar River Navigation Company was organized about 1810. Many books and papers of this company were destroyed, and it is impossible to state with any degree of accuracy the details of the company's operation. Many of the subscribers of stock refused to pay the installments, which involved the organization in several law suits. The affair was not settled until in 1825.

In the meantime operations were commenced on the river with the \$25,000.00 appropriation made by the State and funds obtained from the few private stockholders. The president and the directors contracted for the erection of a lock below Greenville, but before its completion, the contractor abandoned the work. Prior to 1835 there had been no general meeting of the stockholders, nor had the company given any evidence that would show its continued existence.

It is a singular fact that Tarboro was the farthest interior point of usual navigation in North Carolina. Various boats, from flat boats to large steamers, have operated on Tar River and Fishing Creek. The first permanent boat, however, was the *Amidas*. This vessel had comfortable cabins, tastily finished and furnished. It also had a large promenade deck and convenience to make the traveler feel at home. It entered Tar River for the first time October 27, 1849, towing four flat boats laden with merchandise for Tarboro merchants. Prior to this time goods were carried to Greenville by boat and wagoned from there to Tarboro. The State appropriated \$25,000.00 in 1846 to complete the improvement of the river for large boats.

In 1848 the Tar River Steamboat Company was reorganized, and was composed entirely of citizens of Edgecombe. A boat



was purchased to operate between Tarboro and Washington. Soon afterwards a boat named *Edgewcombe* was operated between these points.

In 1869 navigation was resumed by Captain Hattan, of the *Cotton Plant*. This boat, however, was small and insufficient. It remained for Captain A. P. Hurt to introduce a new and larger boat, which was successfully operated by Captain Styron. Captain A. W. Styron, in charge of the *Edgewcombe*, maintained a satisfactory schedule between Tarboro and Washington. He offered the shippers a fairer freight rate, and received a good patronage and soon built more boats. In the course of three years the *Greenville*, *Tarboro*, and *Edgewcombe* were operating on Tar River. In the fall of 1882 Captain Styron did not receive the usual amount of freight on account of the railroad rates and the decline of business. He was, therefore, compelled to discontinue the *Tarboro*. In 1880 the *Edgewcombe* was sold for \$3,500.00 to N. L. Fulford and Skinner Hoskins, who, for a time, operated the boat as before. The *Edgewcombe* cost \$5,000.00, was a screw propeller, with an engine of thirty horsepower. Captain Mayo was the operator from 1877 to 1880. The schedule connected with the Clyde Line at Washington for all water routes to Virginia. The boat had a capacity for 225 bales of cotton and sixty passengers.

In 1887 Captain A. W. Styron placed on the river a new boat called the *Beta*, plying between Tarboro and Washington. This vessel was a freighter of sixty tons and drew eight inches of water. It was built to navigate shallow water, had a flat bottom, and capable of transporting heavy merchandise. In more recent times boat transportation has been successfully conducted by the Tar River Company in connection with the Tar River Oil Company, of Shilo and Tarboro. Two boats, *Tarboro* and *Shilo*, are now employed for freight and passenger service. In 1899 the boat *Tarboro* began making trips up Fishing Creek, carrying freight and fertilizer.

The history of railroads in Edgewcombe is of sufficient importance and constitutes a volume of material which would make a chapter itself. Only a mention of the important facts, however, can be stated in the short space allotted for this subject.

Although there was considerable talk, and mention is made of the Tarboro and Hamilton Railroad in 1831, of the Tarboro and Enfield Railroad of 1852, and the Tarboro and Rocky Mount of 1852, the first railroad having its origin in the county dates from 1859. The Tarboro and Enfield Railroad was incorporated in 1852 and the Williamston and Tarboro road in 1853.

In 1859 the directors of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad Company were determined upon building a branch road from the main line at Rocky Mount to Tarboro. The purpose was to meet competition and the close rates of the steamboat lines. A survey was made early in 1859 and the cost was estimated at \$124,718.29. The plan was approved by the stockholders and the books were open for subscriptions of the stock of the branch line. Subscriptions, however, were slow. The result was the stockholders on November 8, 1860, started a plan to stimulate the purchasing of stock. This entitled those who bought stock and paid for same in full by November, 1861, to be admitted as full stockholders in the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Moreover, their dividends would date from 1860.

In this manner sufficient subscriptions were obtained to begin work in 1860. Toward the end of this year the road was completed from Rocky Mount to Tar River. Bridge building delayed further construction for sometime, but the road was finally extended across the river. The road paid well. The first two months this track received a net income of \$1,239.46. The gross income was \$1,605.09 less \$365.73 operating expenses. This road proved an important asset during the war of 1861-65. The building of this branch railroad was due to the untiring efforts of Robert R. Bridgers, who afterward became president of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad Company and the founder of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company, and for many years its president, being president at the time of his death.

In 1862 the continuation of this road toward Washington was made and in that year an act was passed incorporating the Washington and Tarboro Railroad. This was built and consolidated with the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad Company. The branch road from Rocky Mount to Tarboro was extended in 1869. At this time the extension of stock was made \$3,000,000.00. The points of Jamesville, Plymouth, and Edenton were touched by

this extension. This division was later known as the Williamston and Tarboro Railroad, and was merged in with the Seaboard and Raleigh in 1881. R. R. Bridgers was president and John Norfleet director for several years. The branch from Rocky Mount to Tarboro, which was carried to Norfolk, was later known as the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad.

There resulted, as was the usual custom, much controversy over the Seaboard and Raleigh Railroad. In March, 1882, the citizens of Sparta Township met at Sparta, and the chairman, Elias Carr, appointed a committee to express the opinions of the citizens on the railroad project. The point was made that a line for the road running through Edgecombe by way of Wilson and Raleigh—the route proposed by J. R. Thigpen—was a better route than by way of Tarboro. The committee also showed that it would be ten miles shorter and would not be subject to competition by the Wilmington and Weldon road. Moreover, according to the points made by the committee, it would be less expensive and by crossing Tar River eight or ten miles below Tarboro it would be in a better position to compete for freight on the river than it would at Tarboro.

There was probably some grounds for this argument, since Sparta at this time was thickly settled, there being in the vicinity an inexhaustible supply of marl that could be transported, and in addition the railroad would be in a position to command all the trade of Pitt County, with a population of nearly 20,000. The county of Wilson, which handled more cotton than Tarboro, would also be touched, with the addition of Greene, Wayne, Nash, and Franklin counties. The conclusion reached, therefore, by the committee was that if a line was necessary for Tarboro it could be accommodated by a branch line.

In the meantime the chief engineer, C. L. McAlpine, came to Tarboro and informed the people that he was sent to build the road from Tarboro to Williamston, and that his instructions had not been changed. On March 30, 1882, H. J. Rogers, vice-president, wrote the *Tarboro Southerner*, the road would run from Williamston to Tarboro and would be completed by the middle of summer.

The citizens of Sparta learned of the statement and raised \$3,500.00 on subscription and promised as much more as an in-

ducement for the road to pass through that section. It was to the interest of the town of Tarboro to have the railroad built, as it would give another outlet.

The county had since 1837 been disappointed in not having a railroad. For this reason at times very little effort was manifested in promoting railroad interest. The Seaboard and Raleigh road was hindered because of the lack of the interest in sufficient subscriptions. When the time came to extend this road to Jamesville and on to Raleigh, Edgecombe was supposed to subscribe \$800,000.00. When the subscriptions opened, however, only \$3,000.00 or \$4,000.00 had been given. The people excused themselves on the ground that they had given the former subscriptions for this and other roads \$13,000.00 more than its share, and had received no road. They wanted the assurance of a road, and when the boats on Tar River began to unload iron for the track in 1882 all doubt was cast aside and Edgecombe and its merchants gave liberally.

The earliest projected railroad in the county was the Tarboro and Hamilton. In 1832 at the time that the railroad mania seized the county a law was passed to incorporate this road. The bill was introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Pittman. On January 13, 1833, the citizens of Tarboro in meeting with John R. Lloyd as chairman, thanked Mordecai Flemming, representative from Surry County, and Lewis P. Thompson, representative from Bertie County, for defending bill for Edgecombe. The Tarboro people were anxious to secure the road, but the plans fell through. Edgecombe had been well represented on the Board of Internal Improvements. James S. Battle was one of the four directors appointed by the State to direct and recommend internal improvements.<sup>1</sup>

The surveying began in 1837 by L. S. Pender, who was employed by Frank Hitch. The plan was to run the road to Goose Nest and into Martin County for about three miles. The road was designed as a narrow-gauged road for hauling logs. Soon after the work began the people of Kill Quick raised \$6,000.00 by subscription and induced them to come their way. Consequently,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1876 the fever for railroads was so acute, application was made to the State Legislature for a charter for Tarboro Street Railway Company. The plan failed to materialize.



the Hamilton Hitch route was postponed. The fact also that there were projects of building a road from Suffolk to Tarboro discouraged the original plan. Also a line from Whitakers to Hamilton was discussed and planned.

The road from Tarboro to Hamilton was laid and financed by Whitby and Dixon, commission merchants of Baltimore. The original investment was \$60,000.00. The road operated for some time when Dixon died. The Baltimore Trust Company was appointed to settle his estate. The president of this company was also a stock owner in the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, and he informed Hitch to pull his road up. Mr. Hitch gave the impression he would not, but would sell for \$60,000.00. Mr. Hitch appealed to the people of Edgecombe for assistance and requested them to subscribe \$10,000.00 worth of stock in order that the road might continue. The people failed to respond.

The most recent and, from all indications, the most successful railroad undertaken in Edgecombe and, it may be justly added, in North Carolina is the East Carolina Railway. Henry Clark Bridgers represented and worked out the practical idea which dominated his uncle, R. R. Bridgers, president of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad in 1867. The first attempt at this undertaking was to construct a tram road for logging purposes. The purpose grew and developed under the individual management of H. C. Bridgers, president,<sup>1</sup> until in 1899 a passenger service was established between Tarboro and Macclesfield. The agricultural transportation was heavy, and towns were located along the line and began to grow. Pinetops, Macclesfield, and others between Tarboro and Hookerton in a distance of forty miles, have made this a most profitable asset to the industries of the county. Scarcely a town on this road is not growing, while almost every industry shows the mark of Mr. Bridgers' energy and business ability. Tarboro became the terminus.

Before the end of 1899 eleven miles of track were laid to Pine-tops, and in the following year extensions were gradually made until the line reached Hookerton, Greene County, N. C. The line established a shop at Tarboro, and has valuable rolling stock and

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bridgers was only 17 years of age when this enterprise was undertaken; this is the greatest individual effort ever undertaken in the county.

equipment. The fact that the feat of laying this road was accomplished places H. C. Bridgers foremost among the business men of the State and certainly in Edgecombe County.

Railroads, steamships, and all means of transportation is the life of industry. From the facilities the county has developed and grown to a place among the first in the State. It has enjoyed prosperity and has entered into an era of further progress and development that is full of a mighty promise.

## CHAPTER XI

### EDUCATION

Two unfortunate circumstances influenced the rise and development of education. The desire to learn, especially in the early days, was overshadowed by economic interests. Moreover, there was a lack of qualified teachers. The fact also that the people were more concerned about personal comfort and providing shelter for themselves in the colonial days left very little time and opportunity for constructing houses of learning and furthering education. Education, as it existed in the early eighteenth century, was enjoyed by the few, and the bulk of settlers in Edgecombe were men without education and social advantages. Many, as has been stated, were of the indenture and servant class from England, and were without the elementary rudiments of book knowledge. Those of the more fortunate class were the men taught at home, and were more deeply engaged in accumulating material goods than in diffusing learning among the less fortunate neighbors.

Prior to the Revolution Edgecombe County possessed individuals with considerable talent and with a fair degree of learning. As far as literary merit is concerned, however, the county and the State, with a few possible exceptions, was sadly deficient. Among the early settlers Elisha Battle, Henry Irwin, William Williams, Dr. John Leigh, Lawrence Toole, and a few others were considered men of ability and education during their time. Such men held responsible positions that required a knowledge of writing, reading, and arithmetic.

Possibly the most learned man of this period was Thomas Hall.<sup>1</sup> He possessed remarkable natural talent, and was familiar with the Latin classics. He also had a good grammatical education. He represented the county in the State convention after the Revolution, and was a lawyer of no little ability. His talent as a lawyer, however, was overshadowed somewhat by his poetical inclination. He was practically led away from the practice of law by his studies and poetical efforts. He was a man of ready

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<sup>1</sup> Not Dr. T. H. Hall, who was of a later period and much more widely known.

wit and biting satire. This quality was noticed in all his writings. At the time of his greatest power he was the only professional man in Edgcombe who was a native of the county.

It was customary for the instruction of the youth to be conducted by clergymen and men of pious inclinations. This was due to the fact that this class of men were devoted to a profession that set them apart from the remunerative endeavors in the commercial field. The cause of the insufficiency of compensation for educational work today is perhaps a survival of the old idea that the finer sciences and endeavors are to be rendered without pecuniary remuneration. The first parish clergyman, Reverend Mr. Moir, was perhaps aware of the indifference of the people, and not receiving any support from them he was not interested in establishing a school. About 1741, however, a small school of minor importance was established in the county. If any existed **prior** to this date no records exist which relate the fact. A few years later still another school was erected. These two schools were in active operation until 1770. These were subscription schools, namely, all those attending paid for instruction. This naturally worked hardships on the children of poor parents, who were, on account of necessity, unable to pay the required fee. Even the more wealthy parents failed to send their children outside the county for a college education until the establishment of the University in 1790.

After the Revolution more interest was shown in education, while the people realized its lack. A private school, known as the "Tarborough Academy," was established in Tarboro in 1793. Very little is known of the school except the date of its erection and its location. Tarboro at the time was a small village, but large enough to support a private school by charging a small tuition. In 1799 various societies were organized for public and civic interest. Under the auspices of these organizations the first library was founded in 1800. The movement lasted only a few years and the library was sadly neglected. The books were scattered and interest subsided. Several efforts were made to secure more libraries, but without success until a society called the Agricultural Society was organized in 1810. This society appropriated funds to revive the library. This organization was com-



posed of about thirty public spirited men who made private donations to secure books and to create interest in agriculture and art.

The real movement for better education began in 1806. Yet with the new interest created the progress was very slow and barely kept pace with the population. A year afterwards a general interest for education prevailed, and a free school movement began. By the latter part of 1807 the people had subscribed more than \$300.00. The poor children, however, received little benefit because the free school was abandoned before it became an institution. In the course of five years, however, the county succeeded in establishing seventeen schools, which were operated on a subscription basis. About 400 scholars were in attendance and were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. The success of these schools was described by Jeremiah Battle as very poor on account of the lack of qualified teachers.

The improvement resulting from the schools is noticeable from the advancement made both in the religious, and educational awakening. Knowledge was more general, learning and morality was stimulated, and the foundation was laid for the production of a better society. About 1812 nearly 110 newspapers were taken in the county, interest in the State University was manifested, and, according to the county's population today, very little improvement can be mentioned. Many possessed a desire and obtained a more liberal education than formerly. It was estimated that about two-thirds of the people could read, one-half of the males could write, and about one-third of the females could write their names.

It was characteristic of this period, as well as of today, that the girls displayed considerably more ambition for knowledge of books. With the erection of schools in various parts of the county a better diffusion of knowledge became apparent, with the girls leading both in attendance and work. The account gives the girls commendation for a desire to write and acquire a more important accomplishment.<sup>1</sup>

During the revival of learning societies were formed and established, thus enabling the people to obtain the use of books for those desirous for intellectual improvement. It proved effective

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<sup>1</sup> Edgcombe in 1810 by Jeremiah Battle.

both in learning and morals, but in Edgecombe's characteristic manner, new enterprises that promised utility, advancement and sociability, when the novelty wears off, are neglected and discarded.

The requirements for a collegiate education could not be met by the county's system of schools. The logical result of this fact led to the movement for academies. The boys, prior to 1815, were sent to academies in the adjacent counties. The schools at Westryville in Nash County and Vine Hill in Halifax County had the reputation for being good and also had efficient teachers. Several scholars from Edgecombe were accordingly pupils. The more progressive people realized, however, the expense of sending the boys away from home for a preparatory education and attempted to erect Mount Prospect Academy in 1810. The movement was delayed by the lack of coöperation and financial support.

The State of North Carolina had attempted to foster a system of academies in 1803, and passed a bill to establish a uniform and general system of education in every county by funds to be obtained for the construction of buildings to be known as Academies of Sciences. The curriculum included the studies of English, writing, arithmetic, mercantile bookkeeping, geometry, trigonometry, surveying, navigation, geography, philosophy, and the laws of North Carolina, the last the most valuable instruction no doubt to be taught. The teaching of French was also proposed as a useful and ornamental accomplishment. The citizens of Edgecombe, however, refused to take advantage of the State incorporation, due to the fact that the bill made no provision for any certain revenue for the erection and maintenance of the academy.

The movement for academies continued, however, and, supported by the town of Tarboro, it proved successful. In July, 1813, Thomas Guion, James Southerland, S. D. Cotton, Joseph Bell, and Theo Parker, town commissioners, issued a notice for bids on the erection of a building to be known as the Tarboro Academy.<sup>1</sup> The dimensions of the building was to be sixty feet in length by twenty-four feet in width and two stories high. The

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<sup>1</sup> The old Tarboro Academy of 1793 probably was abandoned about 1800.

structure was made entirely of wood. The construction required about one year and school opened on the second Monday in January, 1815.<sup>1</sup>

Tarboro Academy was fortunate in receiving the services of Robert Hall, a graduate of the University at Chapel Hill, and a former teacher in the Raleigh Academy. Mr. Hall was a man well qualified for the much needed work in the Tarboro school. His scholastic studies at the University was highly commendable. He opened the school for the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography and the study of globes. For these subjects a tuition of \$16.00 was charged. In addition the teaching of Latin and Greek languages and the different branches of mathematics were taught, with a charge of \$22.00 tuition fee. The tuition included heating in the school room, while an extra charge of a reasonable rate was made for students out of town.

The physical equipment of Tarboro's first academy was evidently very crude. Blackboards were just being employed in the larger schools in Europe, and the United States had adopted their use only in the best schools in the cities. The modern school desks and equipment were practically unknown until after 1820. The furniture used, therefore, must have been the old long bench and crudely constructed tables for writing purposes.

The academy in 1824 made a change in its principal and also added the teaching of the French language. A Mr. Griswold, who succeeded Mr. Hall, had resigned and was succeeded by Mr. Eugene Farnan. Mr. Farnan was a native of Ireland, and a teacher of considerable repute. The trustees of the academy announced that Mr. Farnan was eminently qualified to teach all branches of education. Mr. Farnan was widely known as a classical scholar and a student of good literature. He was also a complete master of the dead languages, and also Spanish, French, and English. As a linguist, he was without a superior in North Carolina. The school term had also been changed to begin in September instead of January, as formerly.

The following year an assistant was appointed to help Mr. Farnan, and the academy admitted girls for instruction. It be-

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<sup>1</sup> An interesting law suit was heard in 1826 to prevent erection of a mill dam on Hendrick's Creek, near this academy. It is spoken of here as a public academy.

came known as the Tarboro Male and Female Academy. Miss Anna Maria Ragsdale,<sup>1</sup> a lady of high intellectual qualities, took charge of the female department.

Under the management of Mr. Farnan and Miss Ragsdale, with the assistance of Robert Joyner, secretary of the academy, the school grew into one of the largest in the State. The opportunity for a higher education and the preparation for a college course was of much value. Students came from adjoining counties to attend the school, while the average attendance ranged from sixty to eighty students.

In 1825 Mr. Farnan resigned and was succeeded by Moses Hamilton. The female department had a remarkable increase, and an assistant was employed to teach under Miss Ragsdale. The courses of study were enlarged to include chemistry, astronomy, natural philosophy, rhetoric and history. Those who desired were also given instruction in plain and ornamental needle work, painting, and music. Suitable arrangements were made to board students at \$7.00 per month.

In December, 1827, the trustees of the Tarboro Academy made request for a gentleman to superintend the male department for the ensuing year because of the resignation of Mr. Hamilton. On February 1, 1828, James I. Sanford, a graduate from Hamilton College, New York, took charge. The classical course of studies was preparatory for the University of North Carolina. The academical year was also divided into two sessions, including five months each, a vacation of two months being given at the end of the first session. Tuition for the session was charged according to the course pursued. The rate for Latin and Greek languages, natural and moral philosophy, history, astronomy and mathematics was \$15.00, while arithmetic, English, reading, writing, and spelling was \$12.00. The charges for instruction in elementary education was only \$10.00. Miss Anna Philips, daughter of Reverend John Philips, was said, by an intelligent contemporary, to have had Christian grace and intellectual qualifications and taught school in this academy for several years.

In the meantime under the increased demands for education of a secondary character, more academies were established. In 1820 Mount Prospect was erected by Exum Lewis on his planta-

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Ragsdale had been teaching in Tarboro Academy two years prior to 1825.



tion about seven miles from Tarboro. This was a mixed school of importance. The early teachers were James C. Cary, George Pendleton, both of Virginia, Philip Wiley, an Episcopal minister, Eugene Casey, of Ireland, Alexander Bellamy, of Florida, and Frederick Philips, grandfather of the late Judge Philips.

In 1827 at a meeting of the General Assembly, Mr. Sharpe, of Edgecombe, introduced a bill to establish New Hope Academy. In the same year Sparta Academy was established by W. A. Walker at his residence about seven miles from Tarboro. This academy was in the vicinity of Sparta and made an ideal location because of its proximity to Pitt and what is now Wilson County. Mr. Walker's school was also conducted for two terms annually of five months each. For instruction in Latin, Greek, and the subordinate branches he charged \$14.00. Studies in geography, English grammar, history and composition cost \$8.00, while the course in spelling, reading, and writing was \$6.00. This school was more on the order of a boarding school, an announcement stating that boarding, washing, and mending could be done for \$25.00. In addition to the accommodation of Mr. Walker's residence a small house was constructed and board was obtained in private families for those preferring such board.

In 1827 the Columbia Academy was established and incorporated on the lands of Joseph John Pippin. Asa Jones, Allen Jones, Frederick Jones, Kenneth Hyman, Kenneth C. Staton, Bythel Staton, and Joseph John Pippin were the incorporators and founders. Columbia Academy grew to be one of the largest schools in the State and turned out men who afterwards achieved notable success.

At the same time several men in Edgecombe County who were interested in education—James S. Battle, Henry Blount, Amos J. Battle, Nicholas J. Brake, Isaac Hibbard, Jr., Isaac Sessum, Dr. John H. Brake, Jesse Brake, and others—established a male and female academy in what is now known as Nashville. This school was incorporated in 1827, and was, at the time, an important school.

In the period from 1820 to 1860 academies in Edgecombe County were indeed numerous. Many enjoyed a long existence, while some were of short duration. In 1827 a bill was passed to incorporate Rocky Mount Academy. In 1829 a private school

was conducted at Cedar Hill by Mary and E. Jenkins. This was on the Strabane plantation. The tuition was \$6.00 per session for spelling, reading, and arithmetic. Additional charges of \$2.00 was made for studies in grammar, geography, and needle work.

Two years later subscriptions were made to start a school at Hickory Grove, and the Hickory Grove Academy, about four miles from Tarboro, began its first session on July 26, 1830. This school offered the regular courses then being taught at other schools of similar nature. This school was incorporated in January, 1831.

In 1828 the Quanky Academy was established by Rice B. Pierce, James Bishop, and John Purnel as trustees. A Mr. Weller was the first teacher, and he taught regular courses of study and introduced the new system known as the Hamiltonian system of the French language. This academy was operated on the basis of subscriptions, and resembled a stock company. Another school was opened near the residences of Dempsey Bryan, William Speight, and others in February, 1830. Joseph J. Bell taught here for several sessions and offered the elementary branches of an English education. A tuition of \$8.00 per session of six months was charged. Still another subscription school was started in 1830 by Frederick Philips. This school was scheduled to run five calendar months with a tuition charge of \$6.00 and board at \$4.00 per month. The first practical course in surveying was taught at this school.

In 1834 Elder Mark Bennett, a Baptist preacher of ability, started a school known as Town Creek Academy, and taught here several years. Mr. Cofield King, a successful merchant, attended Mr. Bennett's school and proved an apt scholar. During this same year the Masonic Fraternity of Tarboro opened a school for the instruction of male and female students. This school was conducted under the direction of Lemuel Whitehead, and was supervised by a Masonic school committee, of which Lewis Bar was chairman. All the rudiments of a common school were taught—writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, and the Latin classics.

It is well to remember that in the early nineteenth century children were given an education by means of private funds and

occasionally by societies. Hence the support of Masonry in educational projects. This principle is one of the chief objects of the Masons. Frequent occurrences are found where the Masonic Fraternity prior to 1844 paid notes and tuition for students in private schools. In January, 1849, the Tarboro Lodge paid \$10.50 to Reverend T. R. Owen and wife, who conducted a private school, for Caroline Bell's tuition.

As late as 1850 the Tarboro Academy was under the control of the Masonic Order. A letter written by Henry T. Clark, secretary of the Board of Trustees, relates that the Tarboro Academy was jointly owned by the trustees and the Masons. It was equally incumbent upon both to look after the interest of the school. In event repairs were needed for the school or any act necessitating an expenditure, a committee of Masons was appointed to act with the trustees.

In the meantime the old Tarboro Academy had changed hands, and the male department passed under the immediate care of Reverend John Warnock, a graduate of Glasgow University. The rates of tuition remained the same as in 1827.

In 1835 Miss Jones announced the opening of a new school for girls in the house formerly occupied by Dr. Horn in Statonsburg. The school was known as a female institute, but small boys were also received. Spelling and reading was \$6.00 per session; writing, arithmetic, grammar, and needle work with the above were \$8.00; geography, rhetoric, logic, history, and astronomy included in other studies cost \$10.00, while drawing, painting, and French were \$12.00 extra. Young ladies were accommodated with board by Mrs. Jones on moderate terms.

During the same year the Misses Jenkins opened a female school at Grangeville for the reception of young ladies. A large and commodious house was provided for boarding the students at a charge of \$13.00 per month. Fine lace work and tambour were taught as part of the course at a tuition fee of \$12.00 per quarter.

Another private school was established in Tarboro in 1843 by Eliza A. Lawrence. This school, as was the case with many others, made no attempt at teaching higher subjects. Only a tuition fee of \$6.00 was charged, and spelling, reading, and writing were the principle subjects taught. The subjects of arithmetic, geography, grammar, and history at a fee of \$8.00 were taught,

but not with success when compared with the Tarboro Academy.

In 1847 an educational meeting was held in Tarboro for all the private schools in the county. A conference was held in the Tarboro Male Academy after the regular session's examinations had been held. At this time the examination of subjects in different branches of education was held, to determine the proper modes of instruction. A concert was given the conference by the Female Academy,<sup>1</sup> and the progress made by them was clearly seen. The report of this conference disclosed the fact that Edgecombe private schools were in a flourishing condition. Comparison was made with other counties, and although Edgecombe had been slow to receive the idea of education, more scholars and better schools appeared in the county than elsewhere.

The following is a summary of the incorporated schools from 1793 to 1860: Tarboro Academy, chartered 1793, and again in 1813, and in 1840; Hopewell Academy, chartered in 1822, and rechartered in 1840; Friendship Academy, 1823; Town Creek Academy, 1824; Harmony Grove Academy, 1824; Pleasant Grove Academy, 1825; New Hope Academy, 1826, and rechartered 1842; Columbia, 1827; Hickory Grove, 1830; Conetoe Academy, 1835; Toisnot, 1846; and Mount Prospect Academy, in 1820.

Tarboro Academy kept operating with more or less efficiency, with occasional interruptions. George S. Philips, the son of Reverend John Philips, who was prominent in reorganizing the Episcopal Church in Edgecombe, was principal in 1819. He was not successful, however, as a disciplinarian. In 1844 Josiah H. Brooks took charge and the academy flourished for several years. Robert H. Winbourne, a prominent physician of Chowan County, and a graduate of the University in 1847, was also one of its principals. Frank S. Wilkinson, likewise a graduate of the University took charge in 1859 and conducted the academy in a very efficient manner until it was destroyed by fire in 1885. Mr. Wilkinson then established a private school of his own. Judged by the success of his students in life, no teacher in Edgecombe was more competent.

There was a very good reason for the spontaneous growth of schools in Edgecombe prior to 1860. Especially will this fact

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Thomas R. Owen, a Missionary Baptist preacher, was principal of the academy for several years, while his wife conducted the female academy.



appear, when it is noticed how few that were erected in the county after 1860. The chief reason for the rise of the academy was the strong opposition to free schools. Free schools were to be supported by taxation, and to this most citizens objected. On the other hand, education was a necessity. The more thoughtful realized the fact and established private schools in order that their children might receive the advantages of an education at personal and individual expense. It is to be regretted that the leaders of the county were indifferent about public education, and that isolation from the other sections made the indifference greater.

In 1824 Edgecombe made an appeal for free schools. A circular letter was addressed to the editors of the *Raleigh Register*, in which a plea was made for the general diffusion of knowledge. The wealthy were characterized as displaying little or no interest in educating the less favored classes. The cause of this fact was no doubt attributable to the existence of private schools, and the men with means asked themselves, "Why should we educate another man's children?" Moreover, many in the county who possessed means were doubtless without children, and as a consequence showed a reluctance to pay taxes for general education.

As a means of affording better education, Edgecombe citizens suggested an appropriation of some of the public lands, or the levy of a small tax, which would equalize the burden and injure no one to any appreciable extent. The State Legislature was urged to make a beginning toward an educational movement, and a meeting was held in Tarboro to petition the Legislature, to effect this purpose.

In 1829 a more organized attempt for common schools began. The Legislature of North Carolina appointed five men from Edgecombe to coöperate with a like number from each of the other counties in the State to investigate and report on the internal improvements, and to submit its report to the Legislature at its meeting in 1830. The committee of Edgecombe met at the courthouse the first Thursday in January, 1829, with James R. Lloyd as chairman. The improvements thought to be necessary were good roads, to facilitate transportation, and the establishment of free schools. Immediately after this meeting the *Tarboro Free Press* received and printed a pamphlet outlining a plan for a

common school system that was at the time used in Greece, and which had been adopted by the city schools of New York in May, 1829. The county could not have hoped to have had a better school than those patterned after the Greeks. Theirs was the most liberal of all educations, and their system later proved very beneficial in Edgecombe County.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the common school idea was adopted without opposition or that all that was needed was to say the word and it was done. Indeed, at the meeting at Tarboro many were opposed to internal improvements of any kind. Politics were based, more or less, upon the attitude toward internal improvements, and unfortunately education then, as now, was involved in politics. Much depended, therefore, upon how far the support of education would give to sustain the popularity of the representative in the Legislature.

At the time of the agitation Reding Pittman was representative from Edgecombe. He was nominated by reason of his opposition to all internal improvements thus avoiding an increase of taxation—a very popular attitude with the average citizen. Mr. Pittman, however, did not have an opportunity at this time to declare his attitude upon the educational bill to be introduced in the Legislature.

In the meantime all manner of methods to establish common schools were resisted. Committees were appointed who proposed systems of general education, lotteries were devised to raise school funds, a literary fund law was recommended, and even Sunday schools were suggested to teach the youths of the State. All these proposals, and recommendations, however, fell by the wayside. In these various attempts Mr. Joyner, secretary of the Tarboro Academy, and Louis D. Wilson took an important part. Mr. Wilson was a member of the State Senate at the time and credit must be given for his enlightened attitude toward educational advancement.

In 1831 when the educational questions had been laid before the people for consideration, much more interest was manifested because of economic conditions. People who were deprived of the advantages of an education were leaving North Carolina, and some few were from Edgecombe, to settle in other states which had good schools. The movement toward a better education im-

mediately commenced. Influential men devoted their time and talent to lecturing and writing about education, its uses, and advantages. The movement, therefore, instead of being opposed generally as in 1829, received popular endorsement. Only a few men were decided in their opposition.

The movement became so general and popular that politicians began to revise the attitude entertained prior to 1830. Reding Pittman, at the time a candidate for reelection to the Legislature, renounced his opposition to free schools. He denied making any statement which gave evidence of his having spoken against education. Charles Wilkinson, a man interested in education, made the charges against Mr. Pittman during the election, and had witnesses who were present at the time Mr. Pittman made the statement to take oath before a Justice of the Peace that the following was correct:

"Mr. Pittman came to my house about the time the meeting was held in Tarborough respecting free schools. He stated that one objection he had against them was, that the poor class of people were the class that did commit the most depredations or misdemeanors, and an education would make them more dangerous than they would be without it." The above named conversation took place in the presence of Levi Wilkinson, Robert Long, and Charles Wilkinson, the assistant of Mr. Pittman.

Mr. Pittman failed to receive many supporters, among whom were the illiterate classes. Robert Long, who was unable to read and write, swore before William Savage, a Justice of the Peace, in July, 1831, that the reason that he never voted for Mr. Pittman was because of his open statements about not educating the poor. After Mr. Pittman's failure to be reelected he said: "In justice to Mr. Wilkinson, I will say that he is generally believed to be a man of truth, and I believe that he thinks that I used the language above stated."

Fortunately Edgecombe possessed men of strong minds and ability who favored the movement, and who used their influence to secure State aid. Among these men was Isaac Norfleet, for many years a Justice of the Peace in the county, and a man who was appointed to codify the laws of North Carolina in 1815. Louis D. Wilson also became an advocate of education, and later showed his interest in the poor by leaving them by will a large sum of

money. Dr. Thomas T. Hall was also a champion of education, and exerted his influence toward a rapid culmination of the movement. As the years passed men with influence and vision caught the spirit, and when R. R. Bridgers and others reached the period of action, much weight was thrown into the movement for more enlightenment and less evil.

In 1838-9, when the popular approval made its demand, the Assembly considered means to establish public schools. H. G. Spruill offered a resolution and a plan which suggested the division of each county into school districts, and holding an election in each district on the question of school or no school. It is not necessary to go into the provisions stipulated in the bill. The plan was introduced in the Senate, and as a result of the educational campaign in the Assembly the bill passed on January 7, 1839. The law submitting the question of schools or no schools was submitted to the voters in Edgecombe in August, 1839. In the bill was a provision whereby a tax was to be levied to pay one-half of the teacher's salary, which was \$240.00 per year. The law also carried a provision for the district refusing to establish schools to vote on the question every year until schools were established.

The results of the election in Edgecombe, according to the *Raleigh Register* and the *Tarboro Free Press*, were all but promising. The law failed flatly without any reason worthy of comment. The return of the votes showed that the wealthy and prosperous county of Edgecombe polled only 165 votes for free schools, and 1,075 against them. Robert Bryan and William S. Baker were members of the House, and Louis D. Wilson, member of the Senate. These men, in spite of the sentiment prevailing against education, had supported the bill in the Assembly. They voted and advocated the division of the counties into school districts, the appointment of school committees by the county commissioners, and the election of a county superintendent. Their memory should ever survive, though they failed in a worthy cause.

Edgecombe voted against free schools for several years and withstood the common jests until the system was practically thrust upon her. The *Tarboro Southerner*, in commenting on the law establishing common schools, gave apologetic remarks for Edgecombe's position. People in the counties which had adopted



free schools, it was stated, could not understand the true reason for the county's opposition. The pecuniary bait, it was claimed, though small, was too alluring. "Reason had not her sovereignty respected, and the well established fact that a loose, inferior system of discipline and instruction was injurious rather than beneficial, something to be avoided rather than be purchased." The writer attempted to prove that Edgecombe, "in this as well as all her other principles," was correct.

It was true that the beginning of the common school system was defective and that few benefits of the system at the first was far from commensurate with the expense. However, the wisdom of the few faithful advocates was not ineffectual, for after the movement was well established under competent men the system of education proved advantageous even in Edgecombe. This fact became evident when the system was forced on the county, it considered well the question of how to make the educational plan efficient. It needed only the support of those who were opposed, for it was only a failure when not supported, and a success when the citizens got behind the movement.

In less than ten years after the county was divided into districts and had school committees appointed, forty-three common schools with an average of thirty pupils were established in Edgecombe. In 1850 the county received \$3,200.00 from the public school fund to support the movement. In 1852 D. Barlow, chairman of the Board of Superintendents of Common Schools, reported forty-two school districts, with thirty-nine having schools which were conducted for four and one-half months. The number of male children between five and twenty-one was 1,671; females between the same ages, 1,474. Out of this number 714 males and 429 females received instructions in the common schools. The entire amount expended for the support of schools for the term was \$3,467.67, while the educational board had a balance on hand of \$4,254.60 in cash and bonds. This sum was appropriated for the support of schools for the following twelve months.

Were the common schools a failure, or did they prove inefficient? In the light of facts the answer is obvious. If 1,143 children could receive schooling for four and one-half months at a cost of

\$3,467.67, or about \$3.04 for each child, even though the schooling be of the most meager kind, the system proved a success and a lasting good.

The people who formerly opposed the common schools, although reluctant in giving praise soon, gave unstinted support. In 1852 the county was entitled to an apportionment of \$1,100.00. By an act passed by Legislature the county was empowered to raise by taxation one-third of this amount. Edgecombe had many children to educate, and by her industry and frugality had acquired sufficient means for this purpose, and by contributing such amounts, as they would have otherwise had to pay to the private schools, to common schools, they benefited their own children and at the same expense and under their own supervision conferred on the indigent a charity valuable and worthy.

The people soon realized the necessity of endorsing public schools, and the heretofore wavering editor of the *Tarboro Southerner* made an appeal for the leading men to consider the matter, to adopt a course that would lead to success and place the common schools in a position that would be an honor both to the understanding and sentiment of Edgecombe. In Edgecombe's characteristic manner when once an undertaking was started and success was achieved, the county must go further, and attempts were made to place the free schools far in advance of those of other counties, and to have others to emulate her example. The county aspired to become one that could show to the world that progress was no single purpose, no penurious effort based on selfishness, but a principle more lofty and ennobling for the improvement of man, the promotion of happiness, and the advancement of a common cause.

At the February term of the Edgecombe County court in 1853 it was ordered that at the approaching August election a vote should be taken to ascertain the sentiment of the people as to the propriety of levying a tax to increase the common school fund. This was a very important matter and one which had been negligently delayed. This question touched the vitality of schools—a question which constituted a portion of the very foundation of county institutions—and had received so little attention. An appeal was made for Edgecombe to speak out, and for Town

Creek, Fishing Creek, and Conetoe, which were very passive at the time, to come forward and declare their sentiments. The appeal depicting the attitude of free suffrage is worthy of record:

"Surely," says the writer, "the citizens of Edgecombe are unmindful of the revolutionary character of our social system. Surely they forget that today's prosperity is no surer against tomorrow's evils in that our laws, our institutions, our occupations, all conspire to render uncertain, aye, impossible, permanent family prosperity in that the political, intellectual, and moneyed leaders of the present generation, may leave their progeny the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the next. If not, let us work while it is yet day. Let them all do something while they have power. Politically we can do man no positive good, except by the development of his inherent powers and energies, and in this way, by education we can in the days of our affluence, at a cost we will hardly feel, confer benefits lasting as life. Shall we then prove so contracted in our selfishness, so near sighted in our policy as not to think and act a little for those that are to come after us? Are we unwilling to bear slight burdens now while we are able, for their lasting benefit in the days of their want? Or are we so foolishly vain as to think our descendants above the ills of chance or the influence of misfortune?"

The records may be searched in vain for stronger language or a more logical point of argument for free education. The writer is unknown, but his anonymous memory should live in Edgecombe. Most unbelievers, after all, needed some one to think as they thought and then to change their manner of thinking. This was accomplished by good logic, as was shown in the election of August, 1853. A remarkable progress was achieved and more than \$2,000.00 was subscribed in addition to the amount provided by the law. Many improvements were made which encouraged the spirit of progress which pervaded the people. New buildings were erected and the old ones improved. Public intelligence was greatly advanced, and the pride of the towns and county was naturally affected. Indirectly the wealth and the prosperity of the citizens were increased. Many who had faltered for years now came forward and assisted, while Edgecombe realized the satisfaction of having redeemed itself.

The increased interest in local schools was commented upon by occasional travelers in the county, and that the erection of school houses and the stimulation of education was the cause of Tarboro's spontaneous growth. In 1850 Tarboro had a population of 306, while in 1860 it had a population of 1,048, thus more than tripling its population in ten years. Tarboro was referred to as being a place of refinement, its inhabitants literary, while the father was a classical scholar, and the mother wise in the estimate of her contemporaries. The children were skilled in all branches of education, and that the high eminence to which the people directed their minds in 1852 was reached in 1856, and that the people stood first in refinement as well as first in industry. The period from 1852 to 1860 is known in Edgecombe annals as the reformation. Correspondents from Norfolk, Va., and Raleigh, N. C., during this period make frequent references to the unusual growth of increasing interest in internal improvements.

The common school system went into existence in North Carolina in 1840, but remained inactive in Edgecombe until 1854. In 1850 the free schools here took on the spirit of improvement which made them among the first in the State in 1860. Harmon Ward became chairman of the County Board of Education, and reported a balance of cash on hand of \$8,263.44. Acting in conjunction with Mr. Ward was David S. Reid, ex officio president of the literary board. This worked valuable advantages to the illiterates in the county. In 1850 there were 1,935 whites—654 male, and 1,281 female—who could not read or write, while out of ninety-eight free negroes not one knew one letter from another. The attendance at the various schools for this year were 1,467 whites, or 678 males and 589 females. No instruction was offered free negroes.

Dr. Wiley, Superintendent of Public Education, reported the Edgecombe schools increasing in efficiency and usefulness, and that progress was accelerated every year. Recommendation was made for additional funds to enlarge the system and to increase the teachers' pay in 1854.

In the meantime, the chairman of the school board of Edgecombe called attention to the fact that the Assembly of 1854 had created the new county of Wilson, and did not provide for the common school system in the new county. It was also stated that the





TYPICAL SCHOOLHOUSE IN THE EIGHTIES



county of Wilson did not believe itself to have the power under the general law to organize the school machinery in Wilson County, and for this reason no school board was appointed. Edgecombe accordingly was placed in an embarrassing position, since the schools existing in the new county were of Edgecombe's appointment, and it did not know where the responsibility rested. Dr. Wiley advised the authorities in Edgecombe to suspend action until the opinion of the president and directors of the literary fund could be secured. Edgecombe was subsequently requested to continue schools in Wilson for the year and give the legislation time to establish a uniform law for all new counties erected at that time.

In 1858 the county had twenty-five fair schools with twenty-two licensed teachers. For the support of these schools the sum of \$6,462.39 was reported. Of this amount \$3,168.20 was expended during the year, leaving a balance of \$3,294.19 on hand. Of the original amount the State paid \$1,202.16. The salary of teachers beginning this year began to steadily advance. Two new school houses were built, while a more systematic and financial policy was adopted.

During the war of 1861-65 the progress of education was more or less interrupted. In 1860 the public schools showed their highest development. The per capita expenditure was \$1.25 on the number of children taught. This money was in part furnished from the interest on the permanent fund and in part paid by county taxation.

The results of the war swept away temporarily the principle of taxation, and left the school system more or less demoralized. There were one or two very good schools in Tarboro in 1867 which were well supported by the town and neighborhood. A school for colored children was also established in the town, which was largely attended, and one also on a plantation a short distance from Tarboro, numbering some ninety pupils. Both of the colored schools were under the auspices of northern charitable institutions and were in a flourishing condition.

At the time, however, when the local laws were suspended by the Federal Government, the increase of the State debt was unprecedented, the funds of the county were expended for current expenses, while the fund for the poor left by General Wilson

went into the operating expense fund and was exhausted under the reconstruction regime. Much mismanagement prevailed, and public officers were careless in handling the county funds. Education was the principle sufferer from the state of affairs. Practically no fund was available for common schools. An attempt was made to replenish the State school funds by selling swamp lands, but almost as fast as the money was obtained it was absorbed by the increase in the official's salaries. The colored children became the object of charity and received northern money for education, while the funds for white children were promiscuously applied for selfish ends by white and negro Republican politicians. The Tarboro Collegiate Institute, erected before the war, had almost disappeared. This school was one of the best and largest in the eastern counties. Miss Whitehurst was principal, and Miss A. M. Farrar, elocutionist, and Misses Mary and Nettie Ewell, musical teachers. The exercises of 1865 were the last held by this school until about 1870. Rocky Mount Classical High School, established at the close of the war, continued in spite of the hardships it endured. This school was ably conducted by Reverend D. T. Fowles, a graduate of the State University in 1849. Its average attendance was from twenty-five to forty scholars. Its purpose was to fit boys for business and to give them a good English education.

In 1870 the free schools were again placed on a growing basis. The race problem relative to education was also decided about this time. The first free school for white children in the county after the war was built this year in front of the house in which H. D. Teel then lived.<sup>1</sup> It opened in the following spring for instruction. In 1878 interest in education was greatly stimulated. The law relating to the public schools and the appropriation of State funds proved very beneficial and the people of Edgecombe responded to the movement. The following year there were twenty-eight white schools in the county and forty-four colored. Emphasis was placed in giving the colored race an education and to the credit of the whites, the matter was fully considered and supported. A large school for the negro was erected at Princeville, another at Battleboro, a third school at Whitakers, and others at other places in the county. C. M. Epps, a negro teacher,

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<sup>1</sup> In Town Common.





NEGRO DOMESTIC ART CLASS



received support from the white people and accomplished good until he was debarred from the negro schools by the negroes themselves, who declared he was a Democrat. During the fusion era he was persecuted by his race. He later left Edgecombe County, and was appointed assistant superintendent of the colored Normal School at Plymouth.

In 1881 a permanent organization was effected having for its object the establishment and incorporation of a school at Tarboro and to be known as the "Edgecombe High School." T. H. Gatlin was elected president, George Howard, vice-president, and N. M. Lawrence, secretary and treasurer. Thirteen of the leading citizens were elected trustees. Reverend J. D. Arnold was made principal. This school was modernly equipped with "National Desks," and a music department was established with good instruments. The rates of board and tuition were reasonable, and within reach of the middle class.

In 1882 noticeable progress was made in education. J. D. Jenkins, County Superintendent of Public Instruction, reported an examination for sixty-one teachers, of which number only six were white males, sixteen were white females; thirty-two were colored males, and seven colored females. The number of public schools was seventy-four, thirty-three white and forty-one colored. The number of pupils enrolled were 3,576, 817 of these being white, and 2,759 colored. The average attendance for the whites was 464, and 1,504 for the colored. The county was divided into five school districts for the whites and an equal number for the colored. The whites had twenty-three schoolhouses and the colored thirty-three. The average salary per month of the white teacher was \$27.13, of the colored, \$23.55. The contrast between the number enrolled and the number of children in the county is noticeable. There were 2,392 white children, and 5,687 colored. About one-third of the whites were enrolled, while nearly one-half of the colored children attended school. The difference, however, was more apparent than real, since many white children attended private schools.

In 1882 the movement for the first graded school in Edgecombe was suggested. One school was proposed for the whites and one for the colored. The graded school was the proposed remedy for the defects in the existing system of common schools. Four

months in the year was more than the average time in which free schools were open, the money to run them being insufficient. The school committees were also forced to employ inferior teachers because of the lack of funds. This principle had brought free schools in more or less disrepute, and for this reason the attendance was very small. There was a small chance of the Legislature increasing taxes because the State was burdened with debt and was suffering from inefficiency. Even should this be done, the prejudice against free schools would not be eliminated for several years. For this reason the graded school was considered a remedy.

Tarboro at the beginning was opposed to voting for graded schools. The anti-school element pointed out, as one reason for objection, the fact that an educated negro had forged a note on his employer. They used the illustration that the chief end of man is happiness, and that a dog with a full belly was happy, therefore let man become like a dog. All manner of excuses were presented. Contentions were made that the graded schools would build up the town at the expense of the county, and therefore, both town and county would suffer. Moreover, it was claimed that graded schools would be of benefit to small children only and little help to those that were advanced. Taxes imposed were also too much for those in the opposition. The negroes even claimed that not enough money was given to them. A few whites also took the stand that those who were careful and solicitous about the moral and social training of their children were unwilling to have them come in contact with children whose training had been neglected. This ground afterwards proved erroneous, because the graded system strengthened the character and nature of the average child. It annihilated caste and autocracy among children. The rich and poor sat side by side in the same class under the same instruction, while the weak remained weak, and the strong grew stronger. Intelligence, honesty, and integrity were the tests then as now by which all were tried and by which all fell or stood. The poor were elevated in the graded school system, the more fortunate were taught that the only distinctions of any value were those of intellectual and moral worth.

The county commissioners ordered an election on May 7, 1883, to determine whether the people of No. 1 Township wanted or did not want graded schools. The rate of taxation as a method



of showing the expense of the schools was placed at thirty-three and one-third cents on the \$100.00 worth of property and twenty cents on the pole. The tax was to be levied if a majority of the qualified voters voted for the schools.

When the election came off it was shown, however, that although the school question was defeated, the property owners were decidedly in favor of schools. Only a few of them voted against it. Race prejudice defeated the bill. Aaron Bridgers, negro representative from Edgecombe, introduced a bill in the House of Representatives authorizing the establishing of two schools for No. 1 Township—one for whites and one for colored. The majority of the white people expressed themselves as being in favor of the education of the ignorant, but not at the costly experiment which the passage of the bill would enforce. As the matter stood, the white people of No. 1 Township paid for school purposes \$3,000, while the colored paid \$1,000. It would be unjust, it was argued, to tax the whites more and to give the negroes the same amount or more for education as the bill proposed. The whites wanted a graded school and to that end hoped that Bridgers would amend his bill to conform to a just method of taxation, whereby the school would be supported by a poll tax rather than by property taxation.

The colored people, however, were obdurate, and if they could not get what they desired, determined to prevent the whites from attaining their program. When the school bill was defeated it was reported that a man from Massachusetts, residing at the time in Tarboro, said to one of the colored citizens, "You have cut your own throats." "Well," replied the negro, "the white folks are busted." The votes for schools were 205, while 517 were polled against the graded schools. The bill introduced in the Legislature, however, with amendments was passed. The voters in the county voted again upon the levying of taxes not to exceed one-third of one cent on property and one dollar on the poll.

In the meantime graded schools in Rocky Mount were erected and in a flourishing condition. The people were wide awake and gave the community as much of the benefits of education as their means afforded. In 1883 the school had 260 children its attendance and received forty additions before the session was over.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rocky Mount school collapsed in 1887 for lack of funds. At that time Rocky Mount High School was erected under Prof Wilcox.

The same year the school at Battleboro was improved under Dr. W. H. Whitehead, W. D. Stokes, and J. R. Stewart. Additional funds were raised, boundaries for new districts were laid and school discipline was greatly improved. George Howard, N. M. Lawrence, C. J. Austin, J. B. Cofield, T. H. Gatlin, E. C. Farrar, and R. C. Brown constituted a board of trustees for the whites, and John C. Dancy, H. C. Cherry, Victor E. Howard, Benjamin Norfleet, Edward Zoella, Henry S. Spragins, and W. H. Knight for the colored. A building was erected on Hendrick's Creek for the white children and one in Princeville for the colored. In about eight years the white school was moved on the west side of the town common and an addition was added to accommodate the increase of pupils.

In 1887 the school fund was insufficient for the support of the schools and a law was passed to tax all liquors, as required by the county commissioners, to supply the insufficiency. At this time there were 800 children in attendance at Tarboro, and almost 8,000 in the county. In 1888 the average per capita expenditure was only \$1.19, less than in 1860. In addition to having nine cents less on the child, the county labored under the disadvantage of two races to instruct in separate schools. The separation of the races was a necessity, but more expensive.

In 1891 the county commissioners ordered an election on the question of an additional tax for the maintenance of the public schools. A letter was received by W. S. Clark from Raleigh informing the people that the tax was voted and the school shown that permanent assistance from the Peabody Fund could be obtained.<sup>1</sup> The school election was held in July with poor prospects for success. However, when the day was over the rally proved effective. Princeville alone seemed passive and at six o'clock only fifty-one votes had been made, and eighteen more were needed to make a majority. When these people heard of the precincts being carried, enthusiasm caught them, and in less than an hour twenty-two more votes were cast. The following is the vote polled and registered:

	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Cast</i>
Precinct No. 1.....	215	122
Precinct No. 2.....	283	145
Precinct No. 3.....	137	73

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<sup>1</sup> Amount was \$1,541.22.





AUTO BUS CARRYING CHILDREN TO SCHOOL



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL, SHOWING EARLY MEANS OF TRANSPORTING  
SCHOOL CHILDREN



In 1888 the school committee, by a vote of two to one, elected W. P. Mapson principal of the colored free school in No. 1 Township, notwithstanding the fact that a petition from parents and others representing over 240 children that he be not appointed. Mapson, however, made a good leader in spite of his rancorous nature. The negro schools grew to be efficient and did much good. These schools were well organized in 1899. A teachers' organization was established under the leadership of John R. Barlow, president, and George H. Porter, secretary, and Mrs. C. M. Eppes, treasurer.

In 1883 the beginning of improvements in the teaching staff was made by county commissioners. F. S. Wilkinson was authorized as County Superintendent of Public Instruction to hold a teachers' institute for both white and colored. The one for whites opened Monday, July 3, 1888, with only two in attendance. The work of this organization increased, however, and the Board of Education appropriated \$100 annually out of the school fund for its maintenance. Prof. Logan D. Howell, of Tarboro, assisted by Edwin A. Alderman took considerable interest in holding teachers' institutes. The system of schools in the county, however, suffered from 1897 to 1899. Mr. Wilkinson, who had labored to build up the schools and its teachers, was turned out of the superintendency when the fusion party came into power. R. M. Davis succeeded him, and afterwards became a man of recognized worth and competency.

Under Mr. Davis the county schools adopted medical inspection for all white schools. The county appropriated \$10.00 for each school, and inspection was carried out in connection with a "health day program." All physical defects discovered, together with data of names and places were kept by the State Board of Health in Raleigh in order to keep a record until proper attention could be given.

Within recent years a movement of school consolidation and compulsory aducation has made remarkable progress. The theory of consolidation is based on the idea for better schools. This could only be accomplished by eliminating two or three small schools and erecting a large school in their place. The same number of teachers were employed with the same expense as formerly. The chief objection to this idea was the inconvenience for children

who might be located several miles from the school. This objection was met by the introduction of conveyances for carrying children living long distances.

The chief problem existing in Edgecombe resulting from compulsory education was the factory situation. One-fourth of the children in the county lived in the manufacturing districts. This fact alone hastened compulsory education. When the law went into effect the city schools were heartily taxed to enforce the letter and spirit of the law. The school board, however, managed the situation effectively and with credibility. Modern and well equipped school buildings have been erected in various parts of the county. Almost every district has a large building, and many have State High Schools and receive State aid. The school at Leggetts is one of the few schools in the State which furnish transportation for its pupils to and from their homes.

In 1910 high schools were located at Macclesfield under H. C. Miller; Tarboro, under H. M. Davis; Whitakers, under J. J. Singletary. The school at Whitakers was operated by Edgecombe and Nash counties. In 1910 Edgecombe turned over the school to Nash and established a high school at Battlesboro. Farm life courses were introduced into nearly all the rural high schools. These courses proved effective from the beginning, and were greatly encouraged by supporters of county schools.

The spirit of education is well demonstrated in the county by its support for all movements to enlighten the people. The moonlight school received support when it was inaugurated about 1916. Paul Jones proved a leading spirit in the elimination of illiteracy. About five moonlight schools were established in Edgecombe. The county also established canning clubs and domestic departments in its system of education. Canning demonstrations were successfully given in the county and modern devices for keeping vegetables and fruits were introduced.

Among the additional improvements was the establishment of libraries in the various schools. Conetoe schools established a nice library with a goodly number of volumes worth \$100.00. In 1908 the county, according to the school law, was entitled to six original libraries and six supplemental libraries from each biennial appropriation of \$7,500.00. By 1909 most all townships had libraries. The High School at Macclesfield added several books to its original



A CANNING CLUB DEMONSTRATION IN EDGECOMBE





library, including an unabridged dictionary with holder. The grounds were also improved and cultivated as a school garden. A betterment association was organized with sixty members. The private schools in the county were less affected and much freer from controversy than the common schools. During the throes of reconstruction the private schools experienced growth and prosperity. Oakland Female Seminary at Logsboro<sup>1</sup> was erected during this period. Miss Covinna Whitaker was principal for several years. In 1869 a movement began to revive the Tarboro Female Academy, which had been abandoned. The county at this time was sending approximately \$25,000.00 away each year for the education of its daughters. As a result of educational propaganda the Tarboro Female Academy was established. Prof. D. G. Gillespie was principal in 1890. Benjamin F. Havens also taught here. Mr. Havens was one of the best prepared teachers in Edgecombe. He studied two years in Germany after finishing his education in this country. In 1899 he received a recommendation from Prof. Martin Krause, the noted teacher of Leipsic. He had charge of the music department, and was assisted by Mrs. Harry Smith.

In 1891 several new schools were established, while some had been abandoned. This year marked the decline of the private schools, since the common and graded schools had proved a success. The following is a table of private schools in 1891, 1899, 1904:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>No. Enrolled</i>
1891			
Wilkinson's Institute ...	Tarboro .....	Mrs. A. W. Hughes...	65
Miss Bullock's School ...	Rocky Mount ...	Miss M. E. Bullock...	104
Miss Barren's School.....	Near Elm City...	Miss Mattie Barren..	33
Tarboro Female Academy.	Tarboro .....	D. G. Gillespie.....	70
Battlesboro Male and Female Institute .....	Battlesboro .....	W. S. Wilkinson.....	74
J. F. Howard School.....	Conetoe .....	Miss Rosa Gregory...	49
Tarboro Male Academy...	Tarboro .....	F. S. Wilkinson.....	39
Perry's Academy .....	Tarboro .....	Rev. J. W. Perry	
		(Epis.) .....	109

<sup>1</sup> Logsboro is now known as Leggetts.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>No. En- rolled</i>
1899			
Eagles Academy .....	Crisp .....	J. F. Webb.....	60
Hill Academy .....	Hill .....	W. A. Bridgers.....	30
Heartease Academy .....	Heartease .....	Miss Mary Beatty....	24
University School .....	Rocky Mount .....		125
Whitakers Academy .....	Whitakers .....	Rev. A. J. Moore.....	35
Tarboro Female Academy..	Tarboro .....	Prof. Dock Brown....	36
Tarboro Male Academy...	Tarboro .....	F. T. Wilkinson.....	36

## 1904

Grace School .....	Lawrence .....	Mrs. M. H. Hicks.....	
South Atlantic Academy..	Crisp .....	F. J. Webb.....	
Tarboro Male Academy...	Tarboro .....	F. S. Wilkinson.....	





TYPICAL PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH



## CHAPTER XII

### BAPTISTS

Among the most interesting, and also influential, forces in the history of Edgecombe is that of its churches. The chief means of social intercourse was through the gathering of Christian congregations. Due to the scarcity of books and libraries in the isolation of the county from the outside world, religious ideas became the principal subject for intellectual development. The earliest of denominations of which we have record was that of the Baptists.

It was not until about 1714 that the Baptists were known in this section, although, according to Morgan Edwards, there were individual Baptists in the colony of North Carolina as early as 1695. Those first settling in Edgecombe County for several years were General Baptists. Many writers have assumed that the North Carolina Baptists were immigrants direct from Virginia, but recent investigation also indicates that the Baptist forefathers found their way from New England as well. Many of the General Baptists settling in the county were of those who had at one time belonged to, but had become dissatisfied with, the Established Church. They withdrew and began to seek after something more in accord with their idea of the doctrine of the New Testament. They also carried many quaint and crude ideas concerning church government and theological subjects; but in their humble and sincere manner they established themselves in bodies, worshipping God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

This group of Baptists were Arminian in their view toward the relation of man's will to that of God. The old records show much carelessness in receiving members in their churches. Burkitt and Reed, in their "History of the Kehukee Association," said: "Their custom was to baptize all persons who were willing, whether they had had an experience of grace or not, so in consequence of this practice they had many members and several ministers in their churches who were baptized before they were converted." It was doubtless this practice that opened a way for a division of opinion, and permitted a more rigid conception to arise in their ecclesiastical affairs, which caused so much confusion prior to 1752.

The first church that existed within Edgecombe County was organized by one William Sojourner, who is said to have been a most excellent man and a pious, useful minister. Very little is known of his early life. He removed with many of his friends from Berkeley, Virginia, in 1745, and settled on Kehukee Creek, near Halifax County.<sup>1</sup> In this same year he established Kehukee Church, which has had a thriving existence to the present day. Sojourner and his followers were "General Baptists," and maintained a strict adherence to principles of baptism by immersion, and the various churches which sprang up under the ministration of these pious people claimed that one "particular faith."

There was a small number of Baptists at this time in the county who held different views from those of the General Baptists. This element also grew out of the Church of England. These had found it against their conception to conform to its polity and doctrine, and withdrew. Because they were Calvinistic in their views of theology—claiming that the atonement of Christ was particular in its application to God's elect—they received the name "Particular Baptists."

Thus there were two divisions among the Baptists from the beginning. The General Baptists, who were in a majority and baptized without requiring an experience of grace; and the "Particulars," who claimed that a person should not be baptized without an experience of divine power, and that God's people were an "elect" or "chosen" people. The latter view was supported by the activities of Jonathan Thomas, a nonconformist preacher of Edgecombe County, who preached vehemently against the mode of baptism practiced by the Pedo Baptists.<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Thomas, his father, and John, his brother, were all preaching in the county when Joseph Parker organized the second Baptist Church of the colony in Meherrin, near Murfreesboro, 1729. Jonathan Thomas, Lemuel Burkett, Jeremiah Dargon, and others traveled from county to county, preaching in homes, public places, in the forest, under bush-arbors, wherever the people could be gathered. The Calvinistic faith owes much to these earnest preachers for its present existence in the county. Thus, while the General Baptists were locating new places for preaching the gospel under the

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<sup>1</sup> Halifax was created in 1758.

<sup>2</sup> These people advocated and practiced infant baptism.

leadership of Elders Paul Palmer and Joseph Parker, two famous preachers from London, the Particulars, under the leadership of a few faithful men, were also doing a service essential to the preservation of their faith, now held so preciously by the "Old School Baptists." For many years these two factions of the Baptists waged doctrinal controversy with intense bitterness. Like the Jews and Samaritans of olden times, they had no dealings with each other.

Neither group of churches was organized for coöperation in church work. Every congregation was left to work out its own destiny. The elders, as tradition holds, were not accustomed to meet in an association or convention, but met in a yearly meeting, where matters of consequence were determined. This was the condition of the churches when, in 1755, the Philadelphia Association of Pennsylvania sent Vanhorn and Miller, two ministers of that association, to travel in the southern colonies and to preach the gospel at the various churches. The Philadelphia Association at this time belonged to the Particular order. Mr. Gano,<sup>1</sup> another minister from the Philadelphia Association, had preceded Vanhorn and Miller on a preaching tour in Edgecombe County, visiting the believers of the Particular faith. He, on his return to Philadelphia, reported the unsatisfactory condition of these people to the association, who appointed Miller and Vanhorn for the purpose of bringing over the General Baptists to the Particular doctrine.

The reception of Mr. Gano and others by these people is very interesting. On his arrival, Mr. Gano requested an interview with the Baptist ministers of the county. The request was refused. At the same time a meeting was appointed among the ministers to consult what to do. Mr. Gano, hearing of this meeting, went, attended it, and addressed the people in words to this effect: "I have desired a visit from you, which, as a brother and a stranger, I had a right to expect, but as you have refused, I give up my claim and am come to pay you a visit." With that he ascended into the pulpit and read for his text the following words: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" He preached from this passage of Scripture with such effect that he made many

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gano was a descendant of a French Huguenot refugee of 1688. He was born in Hopewell, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, July 22, 1727.

afraid of him, and others were ashamed of their indifference. Many were convinced of errors touching upon faith and conversion, and submitted themselves for examination. One minister went to be examined as to his doctrines, and intimated to the people before going that he should return triumphant. Mr. Gano gave him a hearing, and then turned to his companion and said, "I profess, brother, this will not do; this man has the one thing needful to seek." Upon this statement, the person examined hastened home, and, upon being asked how he succeeded, replied: "The Lord have mercy upon you, for this northern minister has put a *mene teckel* upon me."

When Vanhorn and Miller arrived, many in the county still entertained doubts and many more of the General Church seemed to be afraid of them, as they were styled by most people, "New Lights." However, some of the churches received them. The preaching and conversation of these two men had power and proved a blessing to the people. Through their instrumentality several were awakened, many of the members of the churches were convinced of their error and were instructed in the doctrine of the Particular faith. Thus in the progress of time and through the efforts of these two ministers the difference between the two divisions was gradually removed, and the Particulars to a great degree absorbed the Generals. As a compromise the name Regular Baptists was given the two "sects." There were still a few individual members who believed and baptised as before. Some of the churches were organized anew and established upon the principles of predestination. The churches thus newly organized adopted the Baptist faith published in London in 1689, containing thirty-two articles defying Arminianism, upon which the Philadelphia and the Charleston Associations were founded. To make the organization effective, these churches drew up a church covenant, in which they solemnly agreed to endeavor to maintain the discipline of the church. The covenant was as follows:

"For as much as Almighty God, by his Grace, has been pleased to call us (whose names are underneath subscribed) out of darkness into His marvelous light, and all of us have been regularly baptised upon a profession of our faith in Christ Jesus, and have given ourselves to the Lord, and to one another in a gospel way, to be governed and guided by a proper discipline agreeable to the



word of God: We do, therefore, in the name of our Lord Jesus and by His assistance covenant and agree to keep up the discipline of the church we are members of, in the most brotherly affection toward each other, while we endeavor punctually to observe the following rules, viz: first, In brotherly love to pray for each other, to watch over one another and if need be in the most tender and affectionate way reprove one another. We also agree with God's assistance to pray in our families, attend our church meetings, observe the Lord's day to keep it Holy, and not absent ourselves from the communion of the Lord's Supper without a lawful excuse; to be ready to communicate to the defraying of the church expenses, and for the support of the ministry; not irregularly to depart from the fellowship of the church, nor remove to distant churches without a regular dismissal. These things we do covenant and agree to observe and keep sacred in the name and by the assistance of the Holy Trinity."

This covenant of the Kehukee Baptist Association was the first form of discipline or written instruction that appears among the Baptists in Edgecombe County. It was signed by the ministers of Edgecombe and Halifax counties, the principal ones being Jonathan Thomas, John Thomas, John Moore, John Burgess, William Burgess, Charley Daniel, William Wallace, John Meglarre, James Abington, Thomas Pope, and Henry Abbott.

This reformation among and union of the churches in the county may be very easily attributed to the two faithful preachers, Vanhorn and Miller, who labored here more than a year. They returned North and left the work under the jurisdiction of the native ministers, some of whom had been converted under their preaching. Many others caught their spirit and imitated their examples, and carried on the unfinished labors with a laudable zeal, so that before 1765 practically all the ministers had embraced the Particular principles.<sup>1</sup>

Tradition tells that Elder Palmer died before the reformation took place; and Elder Joseph Parker, so far as can be ascertained, was never convinced of his errors or turned away from them. All

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<sup>1</sup> The principles which these men advocated were Calvinistic. The higher forms of Calvinism were brought from the Philadelphia Association by Miller and Van Horn.

the other ministers at this time belonging to the General Order were brought over to embrace the Calvinistic doctrine except Elders Winfield and William Parker.

These reformed churches, although only four in number, entered into an association compact in 1765, and first convened at Kehukee Church. The principal ministers representing the churches in Edgecombe were Elders Jonathan Thomas and John Thomas. Elder Jonathan Thomas died a few years after the association was organized. He was the son of John Thomas, likewise of Edgecombe County. He had a brother by the name of John who also became a preacher of the Baptist denomination, as was their father. Jonathan at first was received into this church and baptized by a minister of the "Free Will" order.<sup>1</sup> But sometime afterwards he embraced the Calvinistic doctrine and became one of the most prominent preachers of the Regular Baptist Society. He was ordained December, 1758. Being a man of talents, very affable in his address and a very able orator, he was received and revered by all men of character with whom he was acquainted. He retained the general esteem of all the churches in his county, and wherever he visited once he was heartily welcomed the second time. He was very orthodox in his belief and had a peculiar faculty, as indicated in his writings, in reconciling apparent contradictions in the Scriptures.

A few years after the union of the Generals and Particulars into the Regular Baptist Society, and the establishment of the association on its original plan, a new order of Baptists, called "New Lights" or "Separates," made their appearance in the county. This division first arose in New England. Some pious ministers and individuals were converted in a revival held by George Whitfield and left the Presbyterian Church on account of its formality. The Presbyterians were, they claimed, too extravagant in their apparel, and would admit no one to the ministry except men of classical education. They complained also that many of the ministers appeared to be unconverted. They also rejected certain doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. Since they claimed to have

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<sup>1</sup> The Free Will Baptist was a distinct denomination, and derived its name from the free will of man to accept or reject salvation. At this time this sect had no permanent organization in the county. A few members came from Virginia to Edgecombe about 1792.

a new conception of the true church, they were given the name New Lights by their former friends. Many of these people were baptized in New England, and the faith was brought first to Edgecombe County by Shurbal Stearns. Stearns had been converted, and immediately feeling the call to preach came to Berkeley, Virginia. Here he met his brother-in-law, Daniel Marshall, and labored there for some time with him in the ministry. Not having met with warm fellowship and success, and hearing of the great spiritual disturbance in North Carolina, Stearns set out for this colony. Elders Stearns and Marshall tarried for some time in Edgecombe County before establishing themselves firmly at Sandy Creek, in the Piedmont section. Many people in the Regular Churches were converted to this belief. As this branch of the church progressed among the people, "many became alarmed and stood in doubt, saying, '*What means this?*'" The churches were gathering crowds and many were connecting themselves with this new movement.

The Separates soon formed a distinct organization, causing much division among the churches. The Regulars, conscious of their strength, became anxious to receive fellowship and commune with the Separates as brothers in the common cause. Prior to this time and as late as 1775—although many Regular Baptists believed in the Calvinistic doctrine—they had been accustomed to receive members without an experience of grace and to baptize those who were willing before conversion. For this reason the Separates refused to commune with the New Light churches. The church at Sandy Run set up a ban of communion against their churches and members. Word of this was received by way of Sussex, Virginia, and the churches in the vicinity of Edgecombe also did the same. Petition was made by the Regulars for a conference to be held in Norfolk, Virginia, upon the matter, and the Regular Baptists sent Elder Jonathan Thomas to effect a union if possible. The Separates likewise sent delegates to meet the representatives of the Regulars and to coöperate with them to that end.

When Elder Thomas arrived he was told why the Separates would not commune with the Regulars. They claimed that the Regulars were not strict enough in demanding experiences of grace when persons made application to them for baptism. They

also claimed that some of the Regulars did not believe that faith in Christ was essential to qualify a person as a candidate for baptism.

By this conference nothing was accomplished; in fact, the matter was made worse. On the first Sunday in October, 1775, all the churches, both Separates and Regulars, met at the Falls of Tar River at John Moore's Meeting House, and were informed of the procedure that the other churches had adopted. A great dissension arose among the Regular churches respecting the propriety of such proceedings.

The Separates maintained that faith in Christ was essential to qualify a person for baptism, hence those who were baptized before they believed were not baptized agreeable to Scripture; consequently, those whose baptism was not valid remained unbaptised members. The Separates remained steadfast in their noncommunion with such churches that had members who had been baptized without conversion. On the other hand, the Regulars claimed priority in the association, while the party which favored the Separates insisted on being the true genuine church, as they had never departed from the original plan on which the churches were first founded. After much desultory conversation the churches divided, and those churches which had begun the reformation held a conference in the meeting house, while the other party convened in the woods the first day, and the second day removed to a private house. It was with clear consciences that the Separate Baptists placed a ban of communion with the Regulars. Many of the Regulars had been recruited by those who were careless in baptizing. The Separates, therefore, thought that they ought to withdraw from the body of men who were, to them, acting contrary to the Scriptures.

The principal churches in the county in opposition to the Regular Baptists at the time when the division took place, were the churches at Toisnot, the Edgecombe Church, near Tarboro, under John Tanner, and Fishing Creek Church. The Church at Falls of Tar River was divided—Colonel Horn, who was a member of that church, was prominent at the time of the contention, and had a very warm debate with Thomas Daniel, a member



of the Regular party. Colonel Horn insisted on the propriety of the Separate procedure, and justified their putting a ban of communion against the Regulars.

Very little work was accomplished at this session of the Baptists, and the association ended to meet a year later at Sussex, Virginia. Scores of delegates from the churches in Edgecombe attended this session, the agitation being intense. In the convention most all the churches, especially the one under Elder John Tanner, had been Separates.

This religious rancor continued without abatement until May, 1782. It was during this time that the mother church of the division (Falls Church) was received back in full fellowship with the Regular faith. This opened the way for the other churches, and a year later the church which had been under the care of John Tanner, at that time under the care of Joshua Barnes, was received. In 1789 the church at Toisnot, under the care of Reuben Hayes, came back. The returning of these churches gave the deciding sentiment and after mature consideration of the division it was deemed expedient for the two bodies to be again united. The names Regular and Separate were buried in oblivion, and the church was known by the name of the United Baptists. For some cause—not easy to explain—the new name was lost sight of at once, and the old one—Regular—prevailed until another division took place in 1829.

Thus the Baptist churches had a long continuous conflict, severe in form and painful in effect, before reaching a state of tranquility and quietness. It was the most numerous, powerful, and wealthiest denomination of Christians in the county. For these reasons strife was all the more intense, since the Baptists made many enemies, especially among other sects. When internal conflicts ceased, new problems from without arose. Religious prejudice and social problems confronted their progress.

The Baptists had many reproaches cast upon them because of their lack of intellectual tone. It was reported by Mr. Woodmason, a taxgatherer for the Church of England, that a Presbyterian would sooner marry ten of his children to members of the English Church than one to a Baptist. This social difference caused a deep rivalry between the Presbyterians and Baptists for many years.

Various charges were also made against these prosperous people by the ministers and agents of England. Reverend Mr. Taylor, of the Church of England, called them in 1772 a body of "Dissenters." He says also in a letter to the Secretary of Great Britain the same year that many called them in reproach "Anabaptists," some "New Lights." He spoke of having talked with some of their preachers, and said they were "surprisingly ignorant and pretended to illumination and assurances." He called them so "obstinate and wilfully ignorant themselves, and that they taught their fellows to be so, too, and that they would hearken to no reason whatever, but followed their own absurd notions." The Baptists grew, notwithstanding opposition. The democratic church government appealed to the popular mind. Mr. Woodmason in his account of North Carolina, in 1766,<sup>1</sup> tells of the sect or party abounding in great numbers in Edgecombe County, "like monsters in Africa, sending out emissaries, a party called New Lights or the Gifted Brethren, pretending to inspiration."

The staunch controversy between the dissenters and the Established Church brought good results to the Baptists. Force of circumstances brought them into action, causing them to investigate for themselves. They became more independent and reliable, and began to build houses of worship; while the ministers became active in public affairs.

In addition to discrimination in law and taxes,<sup>2</sup> which was directed by the Colonial Government, there was a more personal and individual persecution more commonly prompted by envy or hatred for the "hard doctrine," as it was sometimes called. One peculiar example of this stands out prominently in Baptist history. The party involved was a pastor in Edgecombe County, Elder John Tanner. A certain woman of Windsor in Bertie County, whose name was Dawson, became converted and thought it her duty to be baptized. She desired to join the church under the care of Elder Dargan. Her husband was greatly opposed to it, and threatened that if any man baptized his wife he would shoot him; accordingly baptism was deferred for some considerable time. At length Elder Tanner visited Elder Dargan's meet-

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<sup>1</sup> Colonial Records, Vol. VIII.

<sup>2</sup> Dissenting preachers had to pay taxes, while English clergymen were exempt. The dissenters were also forbidden to marry people.

ing and Mrs. Dawson applied to the church for baptism, expressing again her desire to fulfill her duty. She related her experience and was received, and since Elder Dargan was an infirm man, he requested, as was his usual custom, the visiting minister to administer the ordinance in his stead. Whether Elder Tanner was apprised of Dawson's threat is not known. At any rate he baptized Mrs. Dawson. In June following, in 1777, Elder Tanner was expected to preach at Sandy Run Meeting House, and Dawson, hearing of the appointment, came up from Windsor to Norfleet's Ferry on Roanoke River and lay in wait near the bank of the river. When Elder Tanner, who was in company with Elder Dargan, came up the bank from the ferry landing, Dawson shot him with a large horseman's pistol, wounding him. In this condition Elder Tanner was carried to the house of Elisha Williams, near Scotland Neck, where he lay for some weeks. Dawson was frightened, and, fearing Tanner would die, sent a doctor to attend him regularly. After Tanner recovered he never attempted to sue for any damage for the injury, but regarded the matter as a persecution for Christ's sake.

For three years after 1779 no session of the Baptists had been held in the county, but in six months after Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown and the land was free from the British yoke, in May, 1782, the churches convened in association. Rules of decorum and a system of church government was adopted. It was the first gathering of the churches to express themselves as a unified body with an organized purpose. Many expressed themselves unfavorably as to the education of ministers as essential to the qualification of a gospel preacher. "It is," said the moderator of the association for 1783, "a good thing in its place and forms no objection to the character and qualification of a minister. But God calls a man to the knowledge of Christ in the pardon of sin without human learning or with it. God is not dependent on human education. If he needs an educated man, he calls him." Many historians claim this an unfortunate or weak issue with the Baptists, and that it caused the uneducated ministry to retard the progress of the Baptist churches in the early nineteenth century, and finally led the Kehukee Association to take a stand against the Sunday School and Missionary Society in 1829. This is a question of no small consequence and has been debated much.

Immediately after the Revolution the Baptist churches throughout North Carolina extended their influence. Most numerous among these were the Baptists who were then exceptionally strong in Edgecombe County. Men from Edgecombe began to migrate, diffusing the gospel in other sections. A good illustration of this was in 1789. In this year Elias Fort and wife, Sarah, with his sons, William, Josiah, and Sugg Fort, emigrated from Edgecombe County, seeking home in the then unsettled far West.<sup>1</sup>

The emigrant company, when they reached Knoxville, employed General Andrew Jackson to guard and protect them from the Indians across the Cumberland Mountains and as far as Nashville. Elias Fort and his family passed Nashville and finally settled on the waters of Red River, near the mouth of Sulphur Fork Creek, where the village of Port Royal now stands. They entered large tracts of land which descended from father to son to the present time. A lasting friendship sprang up between the Fort family and Andrew Jackson, and later in 1796 William Fort and General Jackson met as members of the "First Constitutional Convention of Tennessee." The friendship was so endeared that William Fort made his will, naming General Andrew Jackson as his executor.

Elias Fort was one of the chartered members of the Kehukee Baptist Association. He, with William Horn and Elisha Battle, were delegates from the church at Tar River.

Prior to the close of the Revolutionary War only four churches were organized in the county; Kehukee Church in 1742, Falls Tar River in 1757, Toisnot in 1756, and Fishing Creek 1777. Falls Church stands unimpaired today on the north side of Tar River, a short distance from the falls. This church is one of the oldest and one of those to first form the Kehukee Association. It was organized by Elders C. Daniel and John Moore, and members that came with William Sojourner from Virginia in 1742. Whether the church was constituted as the free-will or regular Baptist order, is not known. Elder John Moore was pastor for many years, while it was in the Regular faith. He was the pastor when Nash County was formed from Edgecombe, taking this worthy church and its traditions from the mother county. In

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<sup>1</sup> Josiah and William carried their families with them. Sugg Fort married in Tennessee and was for a number of years, until his death, a Baptist preacher.



November, 1777, the church at Fishing Creek was organized. Meady Bozeman, an ardent friend and active minister of the Baptist Society, gave a parcel of land for the erection of the church.

These churches thrived under the leadership of strong and pious men like John Moore, Daniel Ross, Emanuel Skinner, Elias Fort at Tar River Church, John Thomas, Aaron Tyson, William Bond, Ephraim Daniel, and John Stamper at Toisnot, and William Burgess, Benjamin Durkins, and Thomas Joyner at Kehukee. Many additions were reported added to the church at every association, and a mutual fellowship was prevailed among all.

In 1777, the year Fishing Creek Church was organized, the celebrated articles on marriage were submitted to the church by Elders John Moore, John Stampers, John Thomas, and Nathan Mayo, a layman at Tar River. These were the first articles that were drawn up under the religious institution.

If a person intended to marry, the fact was properly published for several Sundays in public congregations in the county by the minister who was to perform the ceremony. The notice was published by a clerk of a Regular Baptist Church, where one or both parties resided. When the persons came for marriage, the minister asked if they were free and clear from all other preëngagements. They were then instructed in the great purpose of the institution of marriage, and were also informed as to their duty to God and to each other.

The real ceremony began when the above preliminaries were over. The man was asked if, in the presence of God and the congregation, he would take the woman to be his wedded wife, "to live together after God's ordinance in the Holy State of marriage, to love, honor and cherish in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity, and forsaking all others, keep only unto her so long as both should live." The man answered, "I will." The same questions were asked the woman, who likewise answered in the affirmative. The minister, then joining the hands of the parties together, continued: "These whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The couple were then pronounced man and wife "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

This is, as far as the record shows, the only form of ritual used in marriage ceremonies. It is similar in many respects to the mode

used by the Primitive Baptists today. The churches enjoyed harmonious fellowship for the next ten years. The beginning of the nineteenth century, however, brought new problems. The greatest revival recorded swept over the county, lasting for over a decade. Churches sprang up in almost every locality, giving a lasting impetus to religious fervor. Conetoe church, formerly a branch of the church at Flat Swamp, was founded in 1803 about eight miles southeast of Tarboro. After remaining as a branch for some time it petitioned for the privilege to be constituted, which was done on Saturday before the fourth Sunday in July, 1903, by Elders Joseph Riggs, Jonathan Cherry and Joshua Barnes. At that time the church gave Thomas Ross, one of her members, a call to take the pastoral care, which for some reason he did not then accept; but on the Saturday before the fourth Sunday in September following he was ordained by Elders, Cherry, and Luke Ward, and received pastoral care of the church, in which he officiated until his removal to Tennessee. After Elder Ross's removal the church was without a permanent pastor, but was served by the neighboring ministers until 1820. Elder Dupree then served until 1845. In the course of time Elder John H. Daniel, one of her members, acted as pastor for several years. His mind becoming feeble long before he died, Elder William A. Ross accepted the pastoral care in February, 1856, and Elder David House took charge in September, 1873, and serving for many years.

The church has always been small. In 1810 it had only forty-five members, and today it has only about twenty. It has, however, been a church of deep piety, and has given more men to the ministry, according to number, than any other church in the county. Elder Daniel, a member, was baptised in December, 1829, ordained deacon in July, 1831, licensed to exercise his gifts in October, 1833. A query was submitted to the conference by this church in March, 1854, and answered, which may be worth noticing.

"Is it right or not right for a gospel minister to attend and preach funeral services over the dead? Answer: We believe it an institution of man, and therefore not right." The church had for many years a good leader and a simple hearted exhorter in the person of William Thigpen, who died June 2, 1885. He was an active member of the society, progressive in his age, but never

aspired to the ministry. He was baptised in September, 1828, chosen deacon in February, 1829, and served as clerk nearly all the period of his membership.

Elder John Page was another early follower of the church at Conetoe. He embraced religion under the preaching of Elder Jonathan Thomas, and became a member of a branch of his church. He was ordained pastor of the church at Flat Swamp, which was derived from Toisnot and became a constituted body. Elder Page died October, 1796, leaving a record of a faithful and true member.

In the same year (1803) Cross Roads Church, one of the strongest churches in the county, was formed. Part of the members of the church were formerly members of the churches at Flat Swamp and Conetoe. Elder Joseph Biggs and Jonathan Cherry, acting together the Saturday before the second Sunday in July, organized the scattered members. On the same day Elder Cherry was called to take the pastoral care of the church. He continued in charge until his death in 1818. After Elder Cherry's death, Elder William Hyman was called to the church, and continued in charge until his death on October 31, 1861. The church then was served for a number of years by Elder John H. Daniel, of Conetoe, then by Elder Daniel House, of Flat Swamp.

In November, 1870, R. H. Harris, a deacon of this church, was licensed to exercise his gifts. In April, 1875, he was set apart for ordination, and on the second Sunday in May, 1875, he was ordained to the administration of the gospel ordinances by Elders John Stamper and David House. He was then chosen pastor and served the church in that capacity until his death in May, 1889. It was this church under the leadership of Elder William Hyman, who was pastor for thirty years, that conducted such a heated contest against the missionary spirit. Elder Hyman was a man remarkable for integrity and candor, and in a plain simple style he showed in a well-written article the difference between the Old and New Baptists.

Cross Roads Church has been the gathering place for several associations since its foundation. Perhaps the largest ever held in the county was held in 1873. The number of persons present on this occasion was supposed to be, at the least calculation, 10,000, and some good judges estimated it at 13,000.

Swift Creek and Prospect Churches were erected in 1804 and applied for recognition in order that the members might worship as an organized body.

In 1805 the Baptist Meeting House at Lawrence's was organized. This church was formerly a branch of the church at Kehukee. Until 1805 Kehukee and Lawrence Meeting Houses were both represented together in the association. In 1804 a committee to inquire into its standing was appointed, and it was found to have been constituted a church for many years. The church at this time was under the pastoral care of Elder Joshua Lawrence, an eminent young member noted for his gifts and zeal. He was ordained by Elders Burkitt and Read at Fishing Creek, now Lawrence Meeting House, which he had accepted, becoming the successor of Elder Gilbert. This church is named after Elder Lawrence. It first had ninety members, but by dismissal to new churches, deaths, removals, and dismissals, the church had been greatly reduced in number. Elder Lawrence, following the spirit of the great revival, succeeded in baptizing as many as twenty-two at one time, and in two years over one hundred were added to the church. The church for a long time was called New or Cotton Meeting House, but later it became Lawrence, the name it bears to the present time.

In 1849 Elder Blount Cooper became pastor, the church enjoying several periods of spiritual awakening under his ministry. After his death in 1852 Elder John Stamper was called and served until May, 1872. In October, 1873, Elder William F. Bell was called and he served until May, 1877. Elder James S. Woodard, of Wilson, N. C., accepted the post. After his retirement in 1882 Elder R. H. Harris served a short time till his death in 1889. This early church furnished many men for the ministry. One of her members, William T. Slater, after having been licensed several years to exercise his gifts, was ordained to the ministry in 1885. Still another member, William Henris, for several years has been licensed to exercise his gifts in the ministry.

Richard Harrison, for a long time a member of this church, showed his tender affection before he died by willing to it \$500, the interest on which was to be paid to the pastor yearly. The



church is still thriving, having approximately seventy members, and being served by various ministers traveling through the county.

Toward the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century Williams Meeting House was also organized. It started with thirty-five members and was originally called Prospect Chapel, but in 1811 it was thought best to remove it to another location, and it was moved to John Williams' farm, he giving the land for its location. This church was constituted on Thursday before the fourth Sunday in August, 1804, by Elders Mark Bennett and Philemon Bennett, with members who were dismissed from Fishing Creek. The church called Elder Philemon Bennett to serve as pastor, which he accepted until the year 1820. Under his ministry the church experienced growth, and in 1811 a revival took place in the church, resulting in about 110 baptisms. There were two members of the church who have exercised their ministerial gifts in public, John George and James Elleanor, but the church offered little encouragement, although the former particularly was very remarkable for a pious and exemplary life.

After Elder Philemon Bennett failed to serve the church, Elder Mark H. Bennett was called as pastor. He served till 1843. After this time the church was visited by Elders R. D. Hart, J. H. Daniel, and J. W. Stamper. There was no regular pastor till September, 1876, when Elder Jordan W. Johnson was chosen to that office. This church has had three of her members ordained to the ministry, Willie Pittman, Blount Bryan, and Jordan W. Johnson.

Thus there was a spontaneous rise of churches and much concern for religion. The great spirit of religion moved the people with tremendous power, resulting in real constructive work for church organizations. The ministers all seemed alive in the work of the church. The first appearance of the great manifestation was discovered in great numbers of people attending the meetings. It was observed also that the congregations were more solemn and serious than usual. The work increased, many were converted, sometimes twelve, fourteen, eighteen, twenty, and twenty-four at several times in one day; twenty-two and twenty-

four were baptized several times in one day at Toisnot and Cone-toe. Some churches in the revival mentioned received nearly two hundred members.

The meetings were also conducted by a very different method than today. One of the most marked differences between the revival of the nineteenth century and the twentieth in the Baptist Church is that of shaking hands while singing, and giving the people an invitation to come up to the altar (or better known as the mourner's bench) to be prayed for. The singing in the early days was used as a means to further the ministerial work. At the close of the sermon ministers would usually tell the congregation that if there were any persons who thought themselves lost and condemned under guilt of their sins, that if they would come near the altar and kneel down they would pray for them, during which time the minister would sing.

These various churches still retained their Calvinistic government as mentioned in the Scriptures, up to 1810, and were without any form of general organization. But it must be remembered that this was a time of organization, and renewed religious life, such as new churches springing up and men congregating, with the common impulse toward union which came from the formation of a national government, led to organization in 1814. This was an assembly of all the churches in the county as an advisory body. Business was discussed and affairs of the church were determined in general. It was a time when organization or system of some sort was most needed. There were at this time and afterwards vigorous proselyting efforts by the Universalists in the county. Conflicts were encountered and overcome by the church organization. A challenge for a joint discussion was made by one of the Universalist preachers after 1814, when the organization was made, to elder Joshua Lawrence, pastor in Edgcombe, a Baptist of great talent and force of character. All of these tendencies proved to the various churches that separated in government, they must ultimately succumb to the more ordered institutions.

This plan of church government was the outcome of union meetings. They were adopted just before the missionary agitation in 1803, and consisted of a union of a few churches which met together at stated times to confer about matters relating to peace,

and general fellowship among the sister churches. Their sessions lasted about three days. Every fifth Sunday was the accustomed time for the meeting to be held, including the previous Friday and Saturday. These sessions were not fettered with any business transactions, such being disposed of at the individual church conferences. These union meetings were not permanent organizations, and were subject to change, so as to suit the conveniences of the churches. Frequently they would be dispensed with for a while and then renewed. No particular form or constitution was deemed necessary, many churches using creeds, preambles, and a short form of by-laws, suitable to the members of the different churches. For general information one of the creeds is given below :

"We believe that God, before the foundation of the world, for a purpose of his own glory, did elect a certain number of men and angels to eternal life, and that this election is particular, eternal, and unconditional on the Creator's part.

"We believe that when God made man at first he was perfect, holy, and upright, able to keep the law, liable to fall; and that he stood as a central head or representative of all his natural offspring, and that they were to be partakers of the benefits of his obedience, or exposed to the misery which sprang from his disobedience.

"We believe that Adam fell from this state of moral rectitude, and that he involved himself and all his natural offspring in a state of death, and for that original transgression, we are both filthy and guilty in the sight of a holy God.

"We believe it is utterly out of the power of men as fallen creatures to keep the law of God perfectly, repent of their sins truly, or believe in Christ; except they be drawn by the Holy Spirit.

"We believe that in God's own appointed time and way (by means which he has ordained) the elect shall be called, justified, pardoned, and sanctified, and that it is impossible that they can utterly refuse the call, but shall be made willing by Divine Grace to receive of offers of mercy.

"That justification in the sight of God is the only imputed of Jesus Christ, received and applied by faith alone.

"That in like manner God's elect shall not only be called and justified, but that they shall be converted, born again and changed by the effectual working of God's Holy Spirit.

"That such as are converted and called by grace, shall persevere in holiness, and never fall absolutely away.

"That baptism and the Lord's Supper are gospel ordinances, both belonging to the converted and true believer, and that persons who

were sprinkled or dipped whilst in unbelief were not regularly baptized according to God's word; and that they ought to be baptized after they are savingly converted in the faith of Christ.

"That every church is independent in matters of discipline, and that associations, councils, and conferences of several ministers or churches are not to impose on the churches the keeping and holding of any principle or practice, contrary to the church's judgment.

"That there is a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, and a general judgment.

"That the punishment of the wicked is everlasting and the joy of the righteous is eternal.

"That no minister has a right to the administration of the ordinance only such as are regularly called and come under inspiration of hands by the presbytery."

It is noticeable that the keynote through the entire articles is that of individual freedom and liberty. No right of the church or its membership is to be infringed upon. Perhaps the reason for this grew out of the early conflicts with civil authority. The Baptists, of all people, desired freedom of speech and conscience, and for this reason every church was a distinct government of its own. This idea of freedom was no doubt in the minds of the framers of these articles.

Officers were accordingly elected as the organization improved itself, the principal ones being the ministers and deacons. The church at first had ruling elders, but it soon became evident that there were no ruling elders mentioned in the Scriptures distinct from teachers, who are called elders; therefore, the practice of having ruling elders distinct from ministers was laid aside.

The manner of receiving members is interesting, and is followed in a similar manner today. In Edgecombe County the customary way for receiving members into church fellowship was for the person who desired admission into the church to attend the church conference, and when the conference sat to come and signify his intention to the ministers or some of the members. The church then received the experience as related by the candidate, setting forth how the Lord awakened him and brought him to a sense of his lost state by nature; and how he had seen the helplessness of his own work to save himself.

If any doubt remained, the minister or any of the members present, asked such questions as were necessary relative to admis-



sion. The questions being answered, the minister usually asked the church respecting the life and conversation of the applicant. And if there was general approval, the minister and members gave him the right hand of fellowship.

A time was then appointed for his baptism, and being assembled at some convenient water, after singing and praying, the minister took the candidate by the hand and led him into the water, holding the hands of the person to be baptized in one of his and in the other holding to a handkerchief tied fast around his head, submerged the candidate, expressing these or similar words: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority of our office, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

After the ceremony was performed, they both coming up out of the water, the congregation joined in singing:

"Do we not know that solemn word,  
That we are buried with the Lord;  
Baptiz'd into his death and then  
Put of the body of our sin," etc.

At the water the newly baptized person was met by the members of the church, and generally saluted thus:

"You are welcome to the cross, brother."

The great revival that swept over the county; the rise of new churches, and the forming of many compacts and creeds proved a most prosperous time for the Baptists. But along with this wave of religion came new dangers heretofore unreckoned. The movement, as all movements must, reached a climax. This made progress difficult until a new dispensation came about 1829. The church had become lukewarm.

The greatest of all movements in Baptist history arose over the question of organization and certain tenets following the period of expansion. The movement first began in the union meetings in the county about 1800. Here in the apparent quietness of the small meeting houses from 1800 to 1829 the problem of missions disturbed many hearts—and created an agitation which the county has not gotten over to the present day.

Elder Martin Ross, a very able minister, favoring the missionary spirit in 1803, introduced a query at the association: "Is not the Kehukee Association, with all her numerous and respectable friends, called upon in Providence in some way to step forward in support of that missionary spirit which the Great God is so wonderfully reviving among the different denominations of good men in various parts of the world?" The query astounded many loyal Baptists and followers of the old traditions. Some men favored and some stood opposed to the measure. There was never any absolute acquiescence given as to merits of the query. A weak and indifferent assent was given to the movement by a majority for awhile, but no heartiness ever obtained.

Those who held to the older doctrines objected so strenuously that they gradually withdrew from the councils that were held. The nucleus around which the movement centered was the church at Tarboro. There had been Baptists in considerable numbers in Tarboro prior to 1819, the year in which the Baptist Church was built, but they had had no regular meeting house. The town contained only one church, called Public Meeting House, at the time the Baptist Church was built, and it afforded a place for meeting for all denominations. The Baptists met here for several years, hearing preaching by visiting ministers. Frequently there were conflicts with the services held by the Episcopalians, and then the Baptists would meet in the old academy in the town or in a carpenter's shop belonging to McWilliams.

On February 6, 1819, amid the great confusion and strife, a conference was held in Tarboro and a church was constituted by a few people which was destined to stir the moral center of the county. Six persons, Samuel Smith, Eli Porter, Peter P. Lawrence, Mamie Joyner, Navey Blake, and Ann Lawrence, were dismissed from their respective churches at Conetoe and Cross Roads to form this church under the leadership of Elders Joshua Lawrence, Martin Ross, Thomas Billings, and Thomas Meredith.

An attempt had been made a few years before 1819 by Elder Nathan Gilbert to form a church, but he failed by reason of not procuring the consent of two or three members to leave the churches to which they belonged.

Elder Joshua Lawrence frequently visited the town of Tarboro and preached. About two years before the constitution of this

church, he had been heard to say that he was powerfully impressed with this passage of Scriptures: "The Lord is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." He renewed his ministerial exertions and commenced preaching here monthly, and shortly afterward the church was formed. Elder Lawrence consented to preach for the small congregation, and later became one of the strongest defenders of the church.

In a few years by letters of dismissal from other churches and by baptism, the church increased greatly in numbers. Under the forceful presentation of the truth as he saw it, Mr. Lawrence, after he began preaching in the regular church in 1826 or 1827, had serious threats made against his life for his opposition to the missionary cause. He was warned by several messages in the course of one week not to come to town the succeeding Saturday to fill his appointment, as his life would be in danger.

Elder Lawrence ignored the warning and preached in the church, speaking his mind freely, using the text parallel to that the Master used when persecuted in Gallilee: "When they persecute you in one city, flee you into another, and Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust from their feet and departed." Mr. Lawrence then left the church for six or eight months, to the regret of many of his followers.

After Mr. Lawrence's departure the church called Elder P. W. Dowd, of Raleigh, who had been a frequent representative to the Kehukee Association from the Raleigh Association, to preach for the congregation. Mr. Dowd at once favored the missionary cause. The bitterness at the Tarboro Church became especially strong and those who held to the older forms objected so strenuously that they gradually withdrew, calling themselves Primitive Baptists; while the others, a more numerous group, were called Missionary Baptists. Several of the male members in the church advocated missions and "Tract Societies." This spirit on the part of many caused individual withdraws from the church. Mr. Eli Porter, a deacon and clerk of the church conference, because of his prejudice against Sunday schools and mission societies, requested in June, 1829, just before the church actually split, his church letter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Kehukee Association voted to discard all sects or pastors advocating the missionary cause and soliciting aid for tract societies.

Later, in 1830, the church voted the adoption of the rules of the Kehukee Association, and Mr. Porter came back to the church as a regular member.

The real climax in the movement came on October 7, 1829. At this time a conference met at Tarboro Meeting House, and on motion of Cofield King and Griffin, Elder Dowd was voted a dismissal from the pastoral care of the church. Joshua Lawrence was recalled by the church to take up the work where he had left it before the controversy began. The missionary spirit, in the meantime, was growing more zealous. Elder Dowd was considered a martyr for the cause he represented, and his followers became more bitter in their expressions. Several of the churches in the county followed the Tarboro Church and passed resolutions barring intercourse with all non-Primitive Baptists. No preacher that came to any of Edgecombe's churches seeking money for missions or society work was admitted to the pulpit of any "Regular Baptist Church." In order to offset the resolutions of the Primitive Baptists the Missionary Baptists issued a circular letter in 1826 which was referred to the churches in the county. The following year the Regular Baptists replied and condemned all missionary societies, Bible societies, theological seminaries, and practices resorted to for their support. This same year witnessed many divisions in the church. Many parties were formed and many unpleasant occurrences took place. The advocates of the new movement, thinking themselves strong enough, met in the new meeting house, which had just been completed before the division, and took possession under the leadership of Mr. Dowd. The members who were opposed to their measures were excluded. The members adhering to the old doctrine had, in the meantime, assembled at the old meeting house, and acting for the church called on those who had acted disorderly and expelled them<sup>1</sup> from the privileges of the church.

Joshua Lawrence became the champion for the old Baptist cause. He was born September 10, 1778, on the farm he afterwards called Corn Neck, now known as the Edwards Place. As was the case of many other of our strongest characters, his youth-

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. Hattmus, R. L. Long, Henry Johnson, Martha Lawrence, Francis Outlaw, Mary B. Dancy, Martha Ann Alston, Harriet Hadley, Mary B. McCotton, Mary E. Norman, and several others were ex-communicated in the November meeting previous to this time.



ful days were spent in sowing wild oats. He gave no promise of that great service he rendered, of that tremendous influence which he afterwards achieved. His education consisted mainly of the training which he received at home. Mr. Lawrence did not even take advantage of this small opportunity. No one saw in him the successful farmer, vigorous and energetic preacher, leader of moral and religious thought, witty writer, organizer of the "Compact," and aggressive leader of a denomination of Christians that he came to be from 1800 to 1845.

Before his vices had matured into habits he was converted to the Baptist faith and was baptized at Falls of Tar River. At the age of twenty-three he began to impart to others in a ministerial capacity the doctrine which had brought light to him. For more than forty years he was conceded to be the ablest local exponent of the New Testament teachings. He proclaimed, without respect to persons, the doctrine of justification by faith, both from the pulpit and from the press.

At the beginning of his ministry there broke out a great revival in the church at Falls of Tar River, where he was pastor. More than a hundred persons were baptized, among whom were some of the most prominent and influential citizens of the county. Mr. Lawrence became conscious of his deficiencies, and realized that in addition to his experience of grace, an education was essential in the work he had chosen. He began to apply himself assiduously to his improvement, and to interpret his own experiences more clearly. He, however, never acquired a thorough education, but he became deeply versed in the Scriptures and church history. In this respect he was fortunate. His knowledge of both history and Scripture enabled him to meet many skilled opponents with credibility.

Mr. Lawrence had just reached maturity when the great movement among the Baptists was at its highest. He was a delegate from his church at the time Martin Ross brought up the matter of foreign missions for discussion and consideration. It is supposed that Mr. Lawrence at first gave his support to the movement, but in the changes of 1821 he began to sympathize with the old doctrine and began his vigorous defense of its cause. He was perhaps the first man in North Carolina who took a decided stand against the missionary spirit. Mr. Lawrence's objection

was really confined to the method by which the advocates of missions sought to carry out their plans. He was not so bitter against the work of foreign missions, as he was against the societies that sprang up in order to promote the interests of the missionary order the support of the clergy, educating the ministry—all which tended to prevent Mr. Lawrence's approval of the movement.

By 1826 his mind was matured and he became the recognized leader of the opposition. To him the new doctrine was being advocated by the will of designing men. To check the progress he presented "A declaration of the Reformed Baptists of North Carolina" to the association. Under this caption it was deferred for a year. There is no record as to the actual facts of this move of Mr. Lawrence's. Elder Mark Bennett, who was also a delegate to the association, said no definite action was ever taken; but we have a strong speech made by Mr. Lawrence defending his plans and denouncing, with strong words, what he termed "speculating with the gospel," and the religious societies of the day.

Mr. Lawrence became greatly wrought up over the division in the church. His heart and mind were set in motion to find some way to restore peace and union suitable to his faction. Had the missionary advocates adopted his thoughts and ideas incorporated in the declaration presented to the association at Shewarkey, it would have averted the great calamity which fell upon this body. The declaration took the position that the only way to obtain peace was to return to the customs which had been practiced throughout the history of the church. It recommended a closing of all old Baptist pulpits against the ministers of the missionary churches. Before this document, however, could reach the association and the public, it was modified by William Clark, who thought it too harsh in tone. Mr. Lawrence rebuked Mr. Clark for the alteration, and claimed that its effectiveness was impaired.

When the actual clash came between Elder Lawrence and Elder Dowd over the possession of the church property in Tarboro, the former used no violent means over his opponent. The missionary element, having a more numerous body, claimed the meeting house as their property. Acting upon this assumption, Mr. Dowd took the key to the church house; whereupon Mr. Lawrence was reported to have said, "Well and good, you may have the key, but I shall keep the books." With these words he picked up the

church records, leaving Elder Dowd in possession of the church. The majority of the members, feeling that they would not have privileges as church members unless they had their records, followed Mr. Lawrence. The faction that he represented had both the records and the members, consequently having regained the majority of the church membership, he reasserted his claim to the church property.

The late Judge George Howard, of Tarboro, who was a boy in his father's printing shop during the time of the church division, was asked, just before his death, by a prominent Baptist preacher, what he thought of Mr. Lawrence and his maneuver. Mr. Howard replied: "I used to think he was the greatest man of his day. When a boy I heard Elder Lawrence compare the difficulties of the church to a sheep down in the mire with two men struggling to get him out, but to no avail. The men failing to secure the sheep, decided to pull the fleece from his body. This illustration Mr. Lawrence applied to the missionaries, who after failing to secure the church property, decided to fleece her of the membership."

After this episode Mr. Lawrence realized that all attempts at reconciliation were futile, and he brought into action his wonderful mental qualities against the new movement. Among the believers and supporters of missions he was dreaded, and the opponents of missions looked upon him as the only defender of ancient customs. He was well-drilled in the tactics of warfare, and his unusual powers were at their greatest efficiency only when in actual encounter. He was a skilled opponent everywhere, in politics and in the church. He has left a permanent literature, both secular and religious, in North Carolina that will forever have its influence upon those who read it. One cannot but be conscious as one reads Mr. Lawrence's writing of a vigorous intellect and a propensity for sound reasoning.

The first essay published by Mr. Lawrence in the defense of the Baptists was *American Telescope*, written in 1825, immediately after the missionary movement began. Mr. Lawrence was a great typifier. He employed certain words for a subject and then used the subject for a symbol, or to typify his discourse. Through the *Telescope* he looks far into the future and predicts the consequences of missionary and other societies in the United States.

The discussion has a historical basis—the motives that prompted a missionary movement for the Indians. The primary object, Mr. Lawrence points out, was that of obtaining money for the realization of the missionary movement. He also showed that the disciples were not hirelings, that they did not receive salaries for their work in the mission fields, and that such a policy was confined to the Church of Rome.

This essay created dissension among the missionary Baptists and no less than nine different articles were written in reply to the "American Telescope." Mr. Lawrence replied to the various articles on November 2, 1827, in another essay entitled the "Clodhopper." Six years later the "Clodhopper" was enlarged, when an application was made to the State Legislature for a charter for Wake Forest College. Joshua Lawrence's power reached its greatest efficiency just at that time. The demand for a charter of a church institution roused him to immediate action. A firm and faithful believer in the separation of church and state, he stated his political views with the same import as he did his religious views. He had his pamphlet presented to every member of the General Assembly. This, however, did not bear influence sufficient to prevent the charter. Following the declaration of Mr. Lawrence the churches in the county drew up resolutions against the State incorporating a church institution.

During this same year Mr. Lawrence published his best works on religion from a Calvinistic viewpoint. This production was called a *Basket of Fragments*, and contained many selections on religious life for the instruction of young people.

A year later, in 1834, he published in the *Primitive Baptist*<sup>1</sup> an article called "Teeth to Teeth, or Tom Thumb Tugging with the Wolves for the Sheep Skin." In this essay Mr. Lawrence symbolized the old school Baptists as sheep in the midst of the missionaries and being gradually devoured by them. It is most pathetic as well as satirical in its exposition. "Go your way," quotes Mr. Lawrence, "behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves." He depicts the scene of salaried preachers as "wolf preachers clothed in sheep skins and pretending to be in a gospel church." It was his expressed purpose in this article to dig teeth to teeth by Scripture for the sheep skin which the Missionaries

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<sup>1</sup> A Baptist organ published by George Howard, of Tarboro.



had assumed in order to devour the sheep in this "garb." To make his thought effective six kinds of ministers of the gospel—self-made ministers, men-made ministers, devil-made ministers, a Christian that makes himself a minister, a gentleman preacher, and God's minister—were described. Each division was taken up in order and portrayed as Mr. Lawrence saw it according to Scripture. The book is a broad survey of so-called hypocracies in the church and the various methods employed by the ministers to deceive the people under them.

During the year 1826 a missionary preacher ventured to stay all night with Mr. Lawrence without knowing who his host was. Mr. Lawrence treated him with courtesy, and surprised his guest the next morning by telling him who he was. Living up to the reputation which had been given him, Mr. Lawrence asked if he had any abolition papers upon his person. His guest, with equal candor, positively denied having any such literature, and showed Mr. Lawrence many tracts and other papers. Mr. Lawrence advised his guest that if he did possess any abolition papers he had better burn them lest he got into "Jack's House" in passing South.

In 1840 several missionary preachers were traveling in Edgecombe in behalf of missions and Mr. Lawrence desired to know of their whereabouts. He wrote to the *Primitive Baptist* accordingly, "If any of you know what has become of these tourists for money you will do me the favor to communicate it to me, for these men have passed me in their routes without calling on me. I want to give them an invitation. My barns have not been empty in forty years. Their horses can be fed when hungry and fatigued; they themselves shall be heartily welcome to the best the pot affords with additional supplies. I wish them and others of like stamp not to think me an enemy because they may differ with me in opinion whether religious or political, for that man is a fool who thinks every man must see out of his neighbor's eyes or be compelled to think as he thinks. Yet I would have it understood that I would as soon believe Judas was a minister of God when a devil from the beginning, as to believe that a missionary hireling is a gospel minister of Christ, for with all of my four eyes for my life I cannot see the difference between selling the Master for thirty pieces of silver and selling the Master's gospel for the highest price."

Occasionally an ardent supporter of the missionary cause would venture a reply to Mr. Lawrence's bitter words of denunciation. The same year of Mr. Lawrence's inquiry for the traveling ministers in the county an article appeared stating that if Old Lawrence was dead they could come among the Baptists in the county with their steam religion and have a good revival.

Following this slight encounter with the missionary preachers in 1840, Mr. Lawrence published in the *Primitive Baptist* a satirical article entitled "Froggery." No other piece of satire against modern monopolies and the incorporation of religious institutions has ever appeared in print in this State. Mr. Lawrence makes use of a frog as a symbol of the church and dissects it in order to show how the church may be rid of the evils of the missionaries. Smooth in diction, convincing and accurate in argument, the essay cannot but impress the ability and force of the writer.

In 1841 Elder Lawrence was offered ten thousand dollars for his literary productions in order that they might be published for circulation. Men dogged him for days at the time for the exclusive privilege of publishing his works for personal profit. But in his peculiar way he refused, with the statement that he was devoting his talent and life to the cause of his church and faith and not pecuniary gain.

In politics Mr. Lawrence was a Democrat and was as earnest in his denunciation of political corruption as he was of the new religious movement. His literary skill and free opinion involved him in many political controversies. He displayed unusual energy and generally met his opponent worthily. The sentiment against the bank question in 1841 was championed by Joshua Lawrence in Eastern Carolina. His greatest political document, the "Mechanic," published 1841, was an exposition on this question and brought comment from the best intellect of the time. The *Portsmouth Old Dominion*,<sup>1</sup> edited by F. Fiske, gave the following approbatory notice of several articles written by Mr. Lawrence against the bank in that year. It says in part: "Reverend Joshua Lawrence, a gentleman, a Baptist preacher of considerable celebrity, who resides in Edgecombe County, has recently pub-

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<sup>1</sup> The *Old Dominion* was at the time one of the leading newspapers of the South and published at Portsmouth, Va.

lished his views upon the evil effects of our present wicked and corrupt banking system, in the *Tarboro Free Press*. Like the Reverend John Leland, Reverend President Wayland, Reverend Professor Sears and other brilliant lights of the Baptist Church, he is the undeviating force of all chartered monopolies, the firm friend of equality and the rights of man."

For several years after the division among the Baptists and the erection of churches by the missionary party, the strife and contention became very bitter. Each party denounced the other in not very gentle and affectionate terms. The missionaries treated the old school Baptists with a great deal of contempt on account of the smallness of their number. They claimed that they would soon become extinct, that their creed was old-fashioned, and that they lacked education and were deficient in culture and refinement. They proclaimed in conversation and through the press that the old party would soon be entirely out of the way and would give them no further trouble. Various names of reproach were applied to them by the missionaries, such as "Hardshells," "Straight Jackets," "Ignoramuses," "Lawrenceons," "Orbornites," and "Anti-Omians." The Primitive Baptists retaliated by nick-naming the new school Baptists as "Money grabbers," "Disturbers of the Lamb," "Dowerdites," "Imbibbers," "Money-loving," "Money-beggars," "Mesmerizers," "Passion-exciter," "Do-and-live Baptists." In order to make the warfare more effective the old school element organized a paper in 1835<sup>1</sup> to promote their cause in a forceful way. The paper was edited by Mark Bennett, published by George Howard, of Tarboro. The original purpose of the paper was to defend the Old School United Baptists from the aspersions by persons professing their own faith because they did not engage in the new organizations that arose. The paper was not inimical to masonry—as was reported and believed by many several years ago—temperance, the distribution of the Bible, and other religious literature; but it did condemn the new methods of religion and the new idea of securing money for religious propaganda.

The two divisions became distinct institutions and had a church government separate from each other. The time of reaction had come after many months of turmoil and affliction. The cycle

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Baptist*.

began anew, with both divisions feeling oppressed and persecuted. Misfortune and confusion, however, strengthened their resolves and plans; it gave them patience to bear the inevitable and the spirit of reasoning to judge their individual weaknesses. Each division became more unified in its doctrine than the collective body was before the separation.

The missionary element, as soon as the split was effected, organized a church under the pastoral care of Elder Dowd. Mr. Dowd was highly qualified to assume the leadership of this new organization. In 1823 he began his ministry. He had missionary principles from the beginning, and in 1833, when he moved to Madison County, Tennessee, he joined the Big Black Church—there being no Missionary Church—on condition that he be permitted to contribute to home and foreign missions.

In 1829 Mr. Dowd and his followers occupied the meeting house on the corner of the block now occupied by the ice factory in Tarboro. The leaders of the church caught the spirit that was awakening and moving the new world. It was a time for organization, and on February 10, 1829, Edgecombe sent representatives to the Missionary Baptist State Convention at Greenville to assist in organizing the North Carolina Missionary Baptist Benevolent Society. Mr. Dowd was elected president and Henry Austin, of Tarboro, treasurer. Many members from the Tarboro Church were also elected on the board of directors. The purpose of the society was to raise funds and to appropriate them to the support of traveling ministers conducting evangelistic campaigns within North Carolina. Mr. Dowd himself was elected one of the missionaries.

The new church in Edgecombe sent a large delegation to the convention held at Rives's Chapel, Chatham County, in 1832. Amos J. Battle, the great grandson of Elisha Battle and a brother of late Judge W. H. Battle, accompanied Treasurer Austin from the Tarboro Church. Mr. Battle was a prominent leader of the Missionary Baptists in the State. His conversion came while he was traveling on a horse through Georgia to one of his plantations in Florida. He had stopped at a wayside country church to rest and the day being the appointed time for services he went in to hear the sermon. It was then that he felt the call to the ministry and on his return from Florida he received the ordinance of



baptism at the same church and from the same pastor that he received the first impression. He entered the ministry in a short time, laboring zealously for the faith he believed. Mr. Battle was very wealthy and supported the missionary movement with very liberal gifts. Before his death he gave two handsome brick residences to Wake Forest College and a beautiful brick church to the Missionary Baptist Congregation in Raleigh.

At the convention Battle and Austin labored zealously for the missionary cause. Through their instrumentality the board of missions was enlarged and plans for more and better churches were made. It was at this convention that Edgecombe's representatives also pleaded for special attention in the organization and discipline of Sunday schools. On his return home Mr. Battle, assisted by Elder Dowd, began an earnest campaign for the missionary cause. This year, 1833 and 1834, is the landmark for the Missionary Baptist movement. John Culpepper, in his seventieth year, visited the county and preached several sermons in a revival meeting. James Thomas, the celebrated minister, traveled for days and weeks in the little villages throughout the county holding meetings in various houses.

The object of these meetings was two-fold. There was an earnest desire to raise means for the spread of the gospel, and to offer a strong opposition to slavery which had a stronghold among the people of the county at that time. On May 16, 1834, this series of meetings culminated in a great evangelistic campaign.

The principal leaders of the movement were Mr. and Mrs. Way. They were assisted by a Dr. Bolles, Reverend Luther Rice, Reverend William Hill Jordan, Amos J. Battle, James Thomas, and two natives of Burmah. The crowd congregated at the church about eleven o'clock, and service was introduced by Dr. Bolles. Mr. Way then addressed the people upon the cause of missions and its relation to the teachings of Christ. To support his view he introduced the two Burmans—two of whom were in the congregation—as an evidence that the missionary labor had not been in vain. The Burmans were requested to stand up and were interrogated as to their conversion. Not being able to talk English, their words were interpreted to the congregation by Mr. Way. During the meantime the women were instructed relative to the

women's conditions among the heathen, at Mr. Henry Austin's, by Mrs. Way.

This campaign received much celebrity and became the cause of much controversy. An account of the meeting was written by a friend of the Missionary Baptists in the *Tarboro Free Press*. The next day, May 23, 1834, there appeared an article signed "Philanthropist" in reply. It was the purpose of this article to confute the awful conditions depicted in the Burman Empire. "Philanthropist" showed that Burmah was one of the finest countries for rice, cotton, sugar, cane, and all tropical fruits. The inhabitants had mines of gold, silver, rubies, sapphires, and other precious stones, and yet, quotes the writer, they are without the great truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This evangelistic meeting also resulted in a bitter controversy by the introduction of the slave question. The matter of slavery became the all-absorbing issue, with the various divisions of the churches in the county. The missionaries were termed bigots and compared with the fanatics of the North, who, in their bigotry, were in favor of immediate abolition. The opposition to the missionaries also took on a racial and political controversy, which was reflected in an editorial of the *Tarboro Free Press*, May 30, 1834. Mr. Howard, the editor, discussed the promiscuous mingling with the Burmans, who on account of their dark complexion, he considered them members of the African race. The fact that the white missionaries introduced these Burmans in the Tarboro society caused the opponents of the missionaries to raise a bar of social intercourse with them. The action of the whites was interpreted as that of being in favor of the emancipation of slaves.

The danger of engaging in political controversy became very obvious. The missionaries immediately offered an explanation to the previous statements that had been made in the convention, modifying to a considerable degree the various charges made by them against the rights of slavery and political freedom. The Reverend Mr. Battle wrote Mr. Howard from Nashville, N. C., in reply to his editorial. He pointed out that the editor misunderstood the meaning of the missionary meeting held in Tarboro. He moreover informed the citizens of Edgecombe that the thought of exciting the slaves to rebellion or revolt was never mentioned

in the entire meeting. In spite of the fact that Mr. Battle published his explanation, the ire existing in the minds of the people was never eliminated. The impression made upon the people at the meeting and the editorial in the Tarboro paper was too profound to be so easily eradicated. The one idea that the missionaries who favored foreign missions were using this as a pretext to accomplish their designs of interfering with servitude in the county remained until the war between the states.

Notwithstanding the opposition, the missionary cause began to take more permanent steps in church work. A movement which proved very helpful to the missionaries was the erection of churches in the largest towns, and especially in Tarboro. Prior to 1850 there was only one church in the entire county. Churches were established after this date at Hobgood, Rocky Mount, Toisnot, Wilson, and after the Civil War in almost all the other towns and villages by the State Missionary Board. More recently places of worship have been established at Conetoe and Mildred. The *Primitive Baptist* denounced the central organized board for church organization as a human institution. Many among the missionaries who were somewhat weak in their faith felt the charge of the Primitive Baptists against the board, and withdrew from its work. However, by much effort on the part of those who believed in the validity of church organization the sentiment turned in the missionary favor, and the State Board of Missions began anew its active work in the county.

One of the most important problems the new church had to contend with was that of its colored members. It was during Elder P. D. Gold's pastorate as a missionary that the question of colored membership came up. For awhile there was a tendency for separate church organizations for the blacks. This tendency, however, was overruled by a majority, and the negro worshiped with the whites until he obtained his political freedom in 1865. Shortly after 1869, a lot, No. 163, was rented from the town of Tarboro for \$1.00 per annum to erect a negro Missionary Baptist Church. This church stood in a square between Congress Street, Water Street, Cedar Street, and Hendrix Street. It is in use now.

For several years the church had the same laws, rules and regulations that the white church had. A dissatisfaction, however, to this system arose in May, 1883. Ella Fetter, wife of Dock Fetter,

professed religion and was favorably received by the church by a majority of votes. As she was about to be baptized one of the deacons objected because of her character. The pastor, George Norwood, refused to consider the objection, claiming it came too late. The deacon then claimed that if the majority of the deacons objected the rite could not be legally performed. On the evening of the ceremony of baptism the church door was locked by the deacons, and feeling reached fever heat. Epithets and slang were generously used. One member even struck another on the nose, but claimed that she was only shouting and was not angry.

The pastor and his followers contended that the pastor was the supposed head of the church, and that his word was law, that the temporal management was his duty and not that of the deacons. He and his supporters, moreover, advocated a different form of church government than the whites, and asserted that if one hundred members would give ten dollars each he would build another church and separate from the present organization. The deacons, however, prevailed and preferred charges of schism in the church and disturbing the peace by violating the church law against the pastor.

Thus it was that the desire for baptizing an unfavorable candidate paved the way for a new church government for the negroes. Although Norwood and his followers were unsuccessful at the time in securing an independent church building, they did secure an individual pastor, board of deacons, and church officers. After the termination of this confusion in 1883, excluding minor and trivial strife, the churches have had a peaceful existence to the present day.

The white churches increased both in numbers and influence very rapidly. In 1872 the church at Tarboro called T. R. Owen as its pastor and witnessed a revival during his administration. This is, as far as the records show, the first revival held in that church. Mr. Owen, however, was no strong believer in revivals, and it is reported by some of the oldest members in Tarboro that when the Reverend George Green came to conduct the meeting he left town. The revival was not a successful one, for only one addition, Willie Battle, was added to the church.

Mr. Owen served the church for about three years, and after him the church was supplied by Reverend Mr. Carter, who lived in







TARBORO MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Wilson and preached in two other churches in addition to the one at Tarboro. It was during Mr. Carter's pastorate that the church held one of the largest revivals ever held in the town. Many additions were made and a profound awakening stirred the entire community. A new church was built following this revival to better aid in the work already begun.

A noted movement in Missionary Baptist history in Tarboro occurred when Dr. J. B. Huffman took charge of the church in 1880.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Huffman was a man of high character. In 1881 he was moved to Raleigh, and was made editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, a Baptist publication. Before this he had made a good impression as a speaker and writer. He and Mr. Owen, having been of the Presbyterian faith, did not favor revivals. Dr. Huffman remained in Raleigh through the dark years of the late war, gathering experiences that proved beneficial in organizing churches in his later life. In 1878 he was called to take charge of the Scotland Neck Church, which at that time was closely related to the church at Tarboro. These two churches experienced a feeling of fellowship and assisted each other in time of spiritual depression and material opposition.

Realizing the powers of Dr. Huffman, the church at Tarboro, in the fall of 1891, offered him the pastorate of that church. Dr. Huffman, feeling that his labors would be more fruitful at Tarboro, accepted. The Missionary congregation at this time was very small. The church was struggling under a debt of \$6,000 on their new church house.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Huffman had succeeded Reverend J. W. Hundley, who had, with the assistance of his congregation, built a new church on Main Street. Mr. Hundley left before the church was completed. O. C. Farrar, one of the leading members, had built the church with the original purpose to present to the congregation the debt on the day of its dedication. Mr. Farrar, however, died suddenly, and his worthy purpose was not

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Carter was succeeded by James M. Macmanary. No events of importance occurred during his stay, and he gave way to Rev. J. A. Leslie, who remained two years, preaching the tenets of the faith with power and persuasion. Mr. Huffman succeeded him.

<sup>2</sup> The old church which stood on Hendrix Street was sold to the colored Primitive Baptist for \$200. This church was the one formerly used by the United Baptists before the division in 1832. At the time of the division the Missionaries received it and worshiped here until 1833, when it was burned. It was rebuilt by the Missionaries and used by them when Elder P. D. Gold was pastor.

accomplished. The church was advertised for sale when Dr. Huffman arrived. He set about immediately to pay off the church debt and met with hearty support from C. A. Austin. With Mr. Austin's aid and with much sacrifice on the part of the individual members, a large part of the sum was raised in the spring of 1894. After accomplishing his work at Tarboro Dr. Huffman sought a new field.

Reverend W. M. Savage succeeded Dr. Huffman and the church enjoyed his ministry for four years. Many additions were made, and the spiritual growth of the church increased during his stay. In 1898 he was succeeded by Reverend Braxton Craig.

The Primitive Baptist Church began a new career after the division in 1832. It seemed, however, that harmony and brotherly affection was not to be enjoyed for any length of time. Parallel and contemporary with the mission split was the anti-Masonic movement among the Primitive or Regular Baptists. When the resolutions were passed in 1830 against missions nonfellowship was also declared against those joining the Masonic fraternity. As early as 1826 much dissension existed between the Baptists and the members of the Masonic order. The controversy was renewed when many of the Baptists joined the fraternity, and it was not infrequent that the ministers themselves belong to that institution.<sup>1</sup> The friction became so acute that James S. Battle, John W. Mayo, and others were appointed as a committee by the church to draw resolutions against members of the Baptist Church joining the Masons or visiting their lodges.

In the meanwhile several of the Baptists were denied the privileges of the church for not renouncing Masonry and other secret organizations. In May, 1855, Thomas O'Berry, who was afterwards a preacher, was tried before the church conference for joining the Know-Nothing Society. Mr. O'Berry answered the charges made against him in person, and stated that he was sorry that he joined the society, and that he had been foolish in so doing. The church forgave him, but at his confession he stated also that

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<sup>1</sup> Elder Robert T. Daniel joined the order and while a member preached a Mason's (James Overstreet) funeral. Mr. Daniel in joining the Masons incurred the censure of many of his Baptist brothers. He attempted to justify his action by preaching a Masonic sermon in which he gave an explanation of the Masonic emblem contrasted with the figures in the Scriptures. He spoke of the Masons as secretly and silently drying up the tears of the helpless widows and orphans, and causing them to light up a smile in their aspect of woe.



he had visited the Masonic fraternity. Charges were then preferred against him for belonging to that order. Mr. O'Berry refused to say that he was sorry and that he would withdraw from the organization. The church accordingly expelled him for violating the church regulation. Some years later Mr. O'Berry recanted and was readmitted into the Baptist Church. The opposition against Masonry and other secret organizations continued in spite of the efforts of many to prevent it, and the law of the church to this day prohibits fellowship with any one who joins such an order.

The Primitive Baptist Church at Tarboro enjoyed good feeling among its membership for several years. Many pious and able preachers were raised up, licensed to preach, and sent out among the various congregations from this church.<sup>1</sup> Elder Lawrence remained as pastor here until 1843. After his death the church was badly in need of a pastor to administer to the needs of the increasing congregation. The desire of the church fell upon Elder Blount Cooper, who was then a member of Conetoe Church. The church witnessed several revivals during his administration, and one of the greatest upheavals of religion, awakening the entire community, was held one year prior to his death. The church now in Tarboro was built during Mr. Cooper's pastorate.

The church at Tarboro had a most fortunate location, being on the direct route to Williamston, Washington, and the lower counties which were at this time thickly settled by the Baptists. Elder Robert C. Leachmon, a refugee from Virginia, preached a great deal for this church during the war between the states with ability and satisfaction to the members. Elder I. N. Vanmeter, of Illinois, also visited Tarboro and preached several times in 1874.

With acceptance of the pastorate by Elder P. D. Gold,<sup>2</sup> of Wilson, in September, 1878, the church began a most useful career. No church in the county enjoyed more peace and affection than the church at Tarboro during Mr. Gold's pastorate here. With his serene and judicious mind he adjusted the affairs of the church

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<sup>1</sup> James Ellenor, Thomas O'Berry, and others were first licensed in the church at Tarboro.

<sup>2</sup> Elder Gold was a descendant from a sturdy, intellectual race. His grandfather, Daniel Gold, served in the Legislature of North Carolina. Elder Gold received a liberal education, taught school, and studied law for a while in North Carolina.

to the satisfaction of the congregation. He remained as active pastor until a few years ago. He was succeeded by Elder E. C. Stone,<sup>1</sup> an Englishman, who came to Tarboro from Wilmington in search of this denomination about 1910. Mr. Stone attended the church services for several meetings before he made himself known to the congregation. He was welcomed by his friends and was later ordained to the ministry by Elder Gold. He was then chosen as assistant pastor, and has filled that office to the present day.

The churches in Edgecombe have been the nucleus of the Baptist faith in Eastern North Carolina. They have also received the greatest edification from those principles which they held and believed. It is because of this reason that they have also had the greatest controversies, the fiercest conflicts, and the most severe criticism of any denomination in the county.

During the struggle between the North and South brotherly intercourse existed between the northern Baptists and the southern wing. The Federal army had all the territory north of Maryland, and the Confederate army all south of Maryland. Communication of every kind was entirely cut off. The northern feeling and sympathies, however, with the trifling exception, were with their southern brethren. Several of the northern ministers broke through the military lines and attended the yearly meetings and associations in the county. Many others also came to preach to the people in this eastern section. Their affection for the Baptist also manifested itself by their eagerness and devotion for reuniting after the cessation of hostilities.

The conclusion of the Civil War brought many problems for the South to solve. One of these was that of the religious freedom of the negro. During the conflict a large number of negroes assembled in Washington City. Among this body were a few who were inclined toward the old school Baptist doctrine. This element assembled and held religious services from house to house.<sup>2</sup> Elder King, a member of the old school Baptist Association,

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Stone placed his church letter with the Tarboro church December 1, 1910, from the Particular Baptist church at Zion Mill Street, Wantage Berks, England.

<sup>2</sup> The members of the colored meetings were from the white churches, and were considered at the time in good standing. They had enjoyed fellowship with the white churches, but were never allowed a part in the church government. Moreover, they were not permitted to have a ministry of their own liking.

visited the Edgecombe negroes and assisted them in organizing a church. He was accompanied by Elder J. C. Sidebulton. A church was accordingly organized and called Beulah Old School Predestinarian Baptist. Elder John Bell was chosen pastor.

In July, 1869, the Baptist Association met in Tarboro, and the question discussed. The argument both for and against erecting distinct negro churches became very warm. A resolution was introduced and was accepted that the white membership, as before, should control the church discipline and government. This meant that the negro, although he possessed political freedom, was to be restricted in his religious liberty. It soon became evident that this did not meet the approval of the negroes. They grew restless as their desire increased for a separate church organization. Several of the white members were anxious to grant letters of dismission to the colored members in order that they might join some other church or organize themselves into a distinct church of the same faith. On the other hand, the majority disapproved of this plan.

Between 1870 and 1875 the agitation in the churches reached its climax. It became evident that something definite must be done in order to remove the restlessness of the negro members. In 1873 the association met at Cross Roads Church, where the question was again called up for discussion. Elder Bennett Pitt, a strong leader of the church, exerted his influence against the negroes, and the church voted against the measure.

It is probable that the negroes would have rebelled at this time had it not been for some of their white friends and a church regulation which prohibited a member, who was dismissed, from joining any other church without the consent of the congregation. Moreover, many of the members of the white churches were of different views. The smallest element, led by Bennett Pitt, still claimed that the negroes were incapable of church government. Many also thought the negroes did not desire an independent church. Elder P. D. Gold, in 1877, in commenting on this question, said: "I do not believe the colored members wish to separate from the whites, and that brethren in general did not yet feel that the colored brethren were prepared to maintain gospel order and hence they could not dismiss them in gospel fellowship."

Bennett Burgess and Abram Wooten, two negro members from the county, visited the church at Washington, D. C., and asked for assistance and advice in getting their release from the churches in Edgecombe. When they arrived in Washington, they were questioned as to their church doctrine and standing in the old School Baptist order. They were then advised that since their church and those in Edgecombe County were of the same faith and order, it would be improper to receive them as members unless they were legally dismissed from the church in Edgecombe. Burgess and Wooten returned to the county, after assuring the church in Washington that they would use all proper means to obtain their letters with permission to join any church of the same faith and order.

Abram Wooten soon found a white member of the Baptist Church who was in sympathy with the plan of the negro organization, and told Wooten if he would petition for a church letter of dismission to join any other church of the same faith and order he would recommend his dismissal. Accordingly in 1877 Abram applied for his church letter. It was granted. Elder P. D. Gold said that the letter Abram carried to Washington City was in regular form and that he was dismissed with the privilege to join any other church of the same faith and order. Mr. Gold said also that it was understood among the members at Autry's Creek that Abram originally intended to join a church convenient to where he lived.

In the meantime, the white Baptists set about to counteract the dismissal of Wooten. In the year 1878 Wooten was ordained in Washington as an elder, and the opposition in Edgecombe was so great that the churches declared nonintercourse with the Baltimore Association in order to prevent communing with Wooten and his followers.

Wooten returned to Edgecombe following his ordination, invested with new power and fixed purposes. In September, 1879, he erected a church of his own liking. His membership was taken from the white churches. As many as seven negro members applied to the church at Tarboro for their church letters to join Wooten's congregation.<sup>1</sup> The church at Tarboro at first refused

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<sup>1</sup> The first members to apply for dismission were Cinda Dancey, Penney Suggs, Rosa Pender, Violet Staton, Elizabeth Lawrence, Rachel Bullard, and Virginia Thigpen.



to grant the letters, but later consented. During the November meeting several more applications for letters were made for dismissal in order to follow Wooten in his church effort.

In 1878 Elder John Bell from Washington visited Edgecombe and preached to the colored people. In the fall of the same year Bell and Wooten constituted a church in Pitt County, called the Radecue<sup>1</sup> Baptist Church. When Wooten was asked by the writer why the name Radecue was used, he answered, "It signified that God's people were few in number." The white Baptists in the county soon realized the futility of further opposition. An unhappy circumstance occurred among the negro members, however, that substantiated what many of the white members had previously said, namely, that the colored members were not capable of self-government. Bennett Burgess, who had returned to the county from Washington with Wooten and who had been so anxious for a negro church, suddenly took a decided stand against it and spoke of the negro church as only a scheme to draw all the colored members away from the white churches. Burgess began a movement in opposition and established a church at Poplar Swamp near Williamson. The fight began in earnest. The two leaders, Burgess and Wooten, began the conflict, the two divisions of the colored members following doing all they could to get themselves together in a church capacity, and Burgess doing all he could to prevent them from accomplishing their design.

The controversy became more complicated by the entrance of a third party in the fight. Among those who followed Wooten from the white churches was Rance Loyd. He had been ordained by Wooten, and for a time supported him in the ministry. But they soon disagreed over the finances of the church. Loyd withdrew from the Wooten element, after being persuaded by several of his sympathizers to set himself up and become independent like Wooten. Loyd, however, returned to the white Baptist, and became pastor of the colored Primitive<sup>2</sup> Baptist Church. The colored members of the white churches were given the right of a church organization, with Loyd as their pastor. They could not,

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<sup>1</sup> The negro Baptist Association derived its name from this church.

<sup>2</sup> This is the same church that belonged to the Missionaries and was purchased from them in 1888.

however, relate Christian experiences or receive new members unless two or more white members were present.

In 1890 the negro church in Princeville was built. A church monument with the image of Wooten carved on it was erected to the memory of the Radecue Baptist Church in Princeville. The members that constituted this church came from Autry's Creek, Sparta, Tyron's Meeting House, and Tarboro white churches. In 1910 another division was fomenting in the Radecue Baptist movement. For some cause, not known, Nathan Johnson, another follower of Wooten, disagreed with him and left the Radecue Baptist, carrying with him Few-in-Number Church near Wiggins Cross Roads. Johnson was also put in charge of Living Hope Church on Autry's Creek and Bethlehem Church near Lancaster. In order to retaliate, the Radecue Baptist Association withdrew fellowship from Nathan Johnson, and treated him and his followers like the Primitive Baptists had treated Abram Wooten and his sympathizers in 1877.

After all the disturbances, agitations, and disagreements over the negro problem it yet remained unsolved. The white churches in the county still had a large percentage of negro members. The matter of practicing communion with them and the colored churches after the recognition and the establishment of separate negro church organizations caused further division in the white Primitive Baptist membership. In 1876 Mr. Taylor, a Baptist preacher living near Coakey Swamp, about twelve miles from Tarboro, started the movement which ultimately ended in a new denomination. Mr. Taylor refused to commune with the negroes, declaring that he did not believe the negroes had a soul, hence he could not commune against his conscience. To remain in the church meant for Mr. Taylor to go contrary to his feeling and to leave the church meant another distinct organization. However, in the fall of 1876 Mr. Taylor accepted the latter alternative and withdrew to establish the Taylorite movement. A large shelter, twenty-five feet wide and fifty feet long, built up with weather boarding and pine boughs to protect from the rain and sun, was erected on Taylor's Hill, near Nolley's Cross Roads. This eventful spot, noted for its many fervent religious gatherings, was nicknamed "Bunker's Hill." It drew its name from the many religious skirmishes which took place there.

The church prospered and Mr. Taylor established more than a score of churches in Edgecombe, Nash, Halifax, and Pitt counties, but a church that has no organization cannot survive, and as far as it is now known no real church government remains as a result of the Taylor movement. There are many, however, who live in these counties who retain and believe the doctrine advocated by Mr. Taylor.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

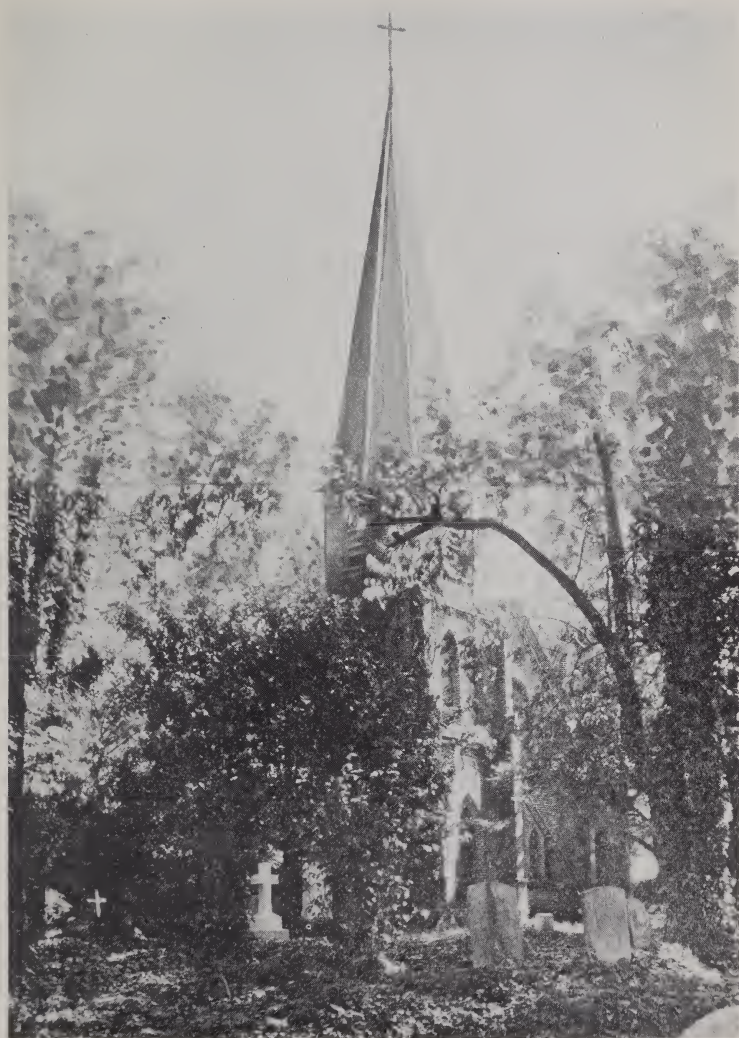
In the early part of the eighteenth century there existed in London, England, a society known as "The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts." The society was organized in 1675, but being inefficient was revised by Dr. Bray, of the Church of England, and a charter for propagating the gospel in foreign parts was granted by King William III in 1701. The duty of this society was to keep in touch with the colonial settlers and to maintain the orthodox clergymen in the British possessions. In order to do this an annual stipend of fifty pounds sterling was pledged by the society to pay the missionaries whom they elected to come abroad. The Crown also gave a bounty of twenty pounds, while the colonists were supposed to contribute a part of the clergymen's salary.

As a result of the efforts of this society the first established and organized branch of the Christian Church in Edgecombe County was formed.

After the transfer of the colony to the Crown, the precinct of Edgecombe was incorporated. Provision was made for a parish with authority to raise money by a poll tax not to exceed five shillings in currency, the purpose of which was to maintain the poor and to pay ministers. A parish court was erected to look after the social affairs of the people. In this court the day laborer, mechanic, and blacksmith were disciplined from time to time. The constable of the village was also local officer, collected taxes and looked after the poor. The church wardens were kept under bond by the precinct committee as custodians of the vestry funds. In 1741 the laws of North Carolina record a law relating to those who had refused to pay taxes in Edgecombe parish because of the uncertainty of its boundaries. This proves that some movement for church organization had commenced before or during this year.

In 1741, under an enactment by Governor Gabriel Johnston, Edgecombe County was authorized to establish a parish by the name of Edgecombe. At the same time a general church act was passed authorizing a poll tax, which in practice was found to be





TARBORO EPISCOPAL CHURCH



very burdensome. Efforts were made to secure another law, which indicates that it was looked upon with disfavor even by the churchmen. No other law was passed, and Reverend Mr. Moir, who was assigned to the parish, expressed himself as follows: "Nothing was done for the encouragement of an established ministry." The sheriff of the county was empowered to summons the freeholders to meet for the purpose of electing twelve vestrymen, who promptly after their election, elected two church wardens. An oath was required by law for those serving as vestrymen. In the oath the vestrymen were to express themselves as not opposed to the liturgy of the Church of England. A failure to perform this duty resulted in a fine of three pounds proclamation money. The term of office was for two years. The jurisdiction of the parish was confined to the boundaries of the northwest and society parishes of Bertie County, from which Edgecombe parish was formed. The line of the parish began at the mouth of Sandy Run, thence up its course to its head, and extending in a direct line to Ahoshie Swamp. From here it followed the old dividing line between the Society and Northwest parishes, of which Edgecombe was formerly a part. All the arrears which were due by the people of Edgecombe were to be paid to the parishes in Bertie.

Included in the general act for the erection of parishes and the election of vestrymen, was a oath prescribed for those who supervised the parish. This oath also contained an obligation to refrain from disturbing the King's peace, to propagate the interests of the church, and not to bear arms against Great Britain.

The first authentic account of a church being erected in the parish is in 1748. This church was designated by a reference in a division of the parish, as a "Chapell" near Elias Fort's on Tar River. There is substantial evidence that this is the church which was located about seven miles northwest of Tarboro on the south-east side of Tar River, near a small spring at Teat's bridge.<sup>1</sup> Clement Hall, who for some time prior to 1744 had been a lay leader in Edenton, was ordained in 1744 and made occasional visits to Edgecombe County.

While there were occasional visits made by a few of the earliest missionaries, the first regular appointed minister for Edgecombe

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<sup>1</sup> The legend is that Teats is a corruption of the name of Teachey, a pirate.

parish was the Reverend Mr. Moir. Mr. Moir's first services were at St. John's Church, New Hanover. In the early part of 1747 he was transferred to Edgecombe upon the solicitations of the inhabitants. In a letter intended for a report to the Society in England, Mr. Moir states that he had completed the parish church in November 22, 1748. He had been in the parish at this time barely one year. He also reported that he had baptized in a single day one hundred children and two adults. It seems that this number, although it appears large, was correct.

Six years prior to the death of Governor Johnston in 1752 the laws of North Carolina state: "Whereas, The county and parish of Edgecombe, being a frontier county, is now so extensively settled that the public business of the said county and parish becomes so very difficult to be transacted," the said county and parish are divided by a line beginning on the north side of Stonehouse Creek on Roanoke River, thence to the north of Cypress Creek on the Neuse, and from here across the river in a direct course to the middle grounds between the Tar and Neuse Rivers. This was at the time the dividing line between Craven and Edgecombe counties. The northern part of the county was erected as Granville County and St. John's Parish. Edgecombe County and Parish maintained their original name.

A year following the division the vestry had levied a tax of three shillings and two pence upon each taxable poll in the parish for the purpose of defraying the current expenses. John Pope was appointed collector. The law appears to have been one of local origin, for the Assembly declared Pope could not use any enforcement in collecting this tax. In the meantime, Pope, it seems, had advanced some money or had turned the money he had collected over to the church wardens. Judgment was rendered against him either for his negligence in collecting or because of the unequal settlement of the tax money after the parish had been divided, for the General Assembly passed an act relieving him.

In 1754 William Williams and William Kinchin, Jr., representatives from Edgecombe, introduced a bill in the Assembly to authorize the appointment of a vestry for Edgecombe parish. It is possible that the two men became active supporters of the church of England. Here also resided in the early colonial period John Haywood, the head of the Haywood family, which contributed



many churchmen to the Episcopal Church. Mr. Haywood was born in the Barbadoes, and came to Edgecombe County about 1730. His son, Colonel William Haywood, was likewise a staunch churchman and patriot.

There were also Thomas Lenoir and Jonas Johnson, members of the established church. There was one Nicholas Smith who settled on Moratock (now Roanoke River) then in Edgecombe, who, it is supposed, contributed to the church interests from 1741 until his death in 1755. Included in the early list of settlers of Episcopalian belief were the Toolles, Suggses, Irwins, Penders, and Knights.

Again in 1756, when Governor Dobbs was in office, the population of the parish of Edgecombe had so greatly increased and the area was so extensive, that a single parish could not serve the people in a suitable manner. An act was immediately passed in this year to divide the parish into two distinct parishes. The dividing line began at Conetoe Creek, where the line of the Edgecombe parish crossed, and followed the creek to its head. Here the new boundary took a straight course to Fishing Creek, near one Michael Dorman's. The line then followed up Fishing Creek to the line which divided the parish of Edgecombe from St. John's Parish in Granville County. All the territory included in the northern part retained the name of Edgecombe Parish in Halifax County, while all that in the south was designated as a distinct parish by name of St. Mary's in Edgecombe.

The freeholders of the parish of Edgecombe met at the county courthouse November, 1756, and elected twelve vestrymen, while the freeholders of St. Mary's Parish met at the Chapel on Tar River the second Tuesday in December to elect vestrymen under the supervision of the sheriff of the county. The newly elected vestrymen were required to take another oath within forty days after the election. The vestry of St. Mary's was also authorized to retain all moneys collected by taxation prior to the division of the parish of Edgecombe for the purpose of meeting the obligations incurred by that parish the preceding year. Such debts as were due from the Edgecombe parish vestry at the beginning of its term were paid by each parish according to the number of taxables. John Pope, the sheriff of the county, had collected a considerable sum of money the previous year, which was equally

divided between the members of the parish by John Dawson and Robert Jones, who were allowed five per cent for their services

Meanwhile, the spiritual condition in the county was at a low ebb. Mr. Moir's itineracy was characterized by selfishness and personal greed. The idea which actuated him seems to have been to get rich and return to England. He owned a plantation which had been allotted to him in the nature of Glebe Lands, granted by an act of the colonial legislature for the support of the clergy. In addition he complained daily of not receiving his salary which was due him, while "the essential branch of the constitution of this Province is to do as little justice as possible to creditors." Mr. Moir was perhaps correct in this assertion, for he was paid in rated commodities and he experienced considerable difficulty in making disposition of them.

Mr. Moir also had friction with the various Governors. The erection of a new parish in Halifax and the change of the name of the parish to be maintained in Edgecombe County to that of St. Mary's, was designed to transfer Mr. Moir out of the parish in the county. The most natural and logical thing to have done was to have given the name St. Mary to the parish newly erected and to have permitted Edgecombe to have maintained its old parish name. Governor Dobbs, however, labored under the impression that Mr. Moir would be transferred to Edgecombe Parish in Halifax. In this he was disappointed. Mr. Moir had investigated Governor Dobbs' character and had also received a sketch from Reverend Dr. Beaucroft. The entire controversy came out when, at the solicitations of the vestry of Edgecombe, Mr. Moir and two members of the parish waited upon Governor Dobbs with grievances in the hope of obtaining redress for some vestry dues. He also appeared before Governor Dobbs when the parish of Edgecombe was divided and when St. Mary's Parish was compelled to pay the arrears of the former parish. The complaints were laid before the Assembly, but to no avail. During the visit, Mr. Moir had several conferences with Governor Dobbs which must have been somewhat heated. Mr. Moir said: "I could never discover in him any regard to truth or equity, and had it not been for a member of the council, I should have publicly exposed him for one of his notorious falsehoods." Mr. Moir also complained "that clergymen were made slaves, and had no chance for a fair

trial, being subject to the whimsicality of the Governor and Council."

As early as 1748, when Mr. Moir had been in the county less than a year, he expressed himself as desiring to leave the parish. In a letter to the S. P. G. in London, he referred to the request of his parishioners for him to remain, because they were not only pleased with his labors, but also that for the lack of a minister, many in the county had turned Baptist. Mr. Moir was at the time having trouble with his vestry. He reported that a vestry would be chosen on Easter Sunday, 1749, that would do him justice, his chief grievance being his failure in securing his salary. Later he stated that the new vestry had done him justice, for the vestrymen met, called the taxpayers to account, and paid his salary promptly. A Glebe was also purchased for him the following year. This vestry also gave him more opportunity and time to visit other places in the county than did the former one.

The controversy between Mr. Moir and Governor Dobbs continued throughout his ministry here. In April, 1760, Mr. Moir issued the statement that he had baptized 206 children and three negroes. Governor Dobbs addressed a letter to the S. P. G. January 22, 1760, in reply to a specific reference made to Mr. Moir's activities in the parish by the Society in England. He said, "I wish that your admonition of Mr. Moir may have good effect. I observe, in his returns to you, he mentions having baptized over three hundred white people and fifty negroes in one year, as I am informed he does very little duty, but lives on his plantation, not showing hospitality as is his duty, and hoarding up his money to return to England."

Mr. Moir sought to clear himself by accusing Governor Dobbs of unjust accusations resulting from prejudice and that he experienced handicaps in his work on account of Governor Dobbs' accusations against him. The character and indolence of Mr. Moir was confirmed by Governor Tryon, Governor Dobbs's successor. He wrote to the Society July 31, 1765, that the Province did not derive any benefit from Mr. Moir, "for under his license to preach everywhere, he seldom preaches anywhere. I do not represent him as an immoral man, but think it would be advisable that he be fixed to some parish."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Moir at this time was authorized to officiate in more than one parish and Governor Hobbs' letter was evidently intended to suggest that one specific parish be selected for his services.

The principal defects in Mr. Moir's ministerial career in the county seems to have been that of indifference to church progress and a desire to accumulate a fortune. The emphasis in all his letters was usually placed upon the latter. In consequence his first attack and criticism of conditions was that against a law passed in April, 1748, authorizing the issue of paper bills to the value of 23,000 pounds. Mr. Moir had his salary paid in these bills and attempted to sell them at ten per cent discount, but he could not succeed. He wrote the Society in England in regard to the matter, but so far as the records show, he received no encouragement.

It is easy to judge how conditions prevailed for the years 1741 to 1767. The Church of England did not thrive, it barely lived. With a field for the work of three missionaries and the efforts of one being partially spent, the spiritual life of the people suffered. The progress of the church was being more or less interfered with by the Baptist ministers, who had maintained a strong footing in all the eastern counties. Moreover, the taxpayers in the parish were slow in paying their taxes, and this kept the parish constantly in the arrears. The taxes that were collected were frequently misapplied, while the collectors and Mr. Moir were constantly in controversy. The negligence of the officials placed in charge of the county courts was a burden well nigh insupportable. The fact also that Mr. Moir was supposed to officiate in Northampton County in 1764, required his absence from Edgcombe when his services were frequently in need at St. Mary's. He was burdened with the parish taxes in this county, and at one time was seven years behind with his salary. In 1765 suit was brought against the sheriff of Edgcombe County in order to collect the salary. The vestry in Northampton failed to bring suit for the same purpose, and in 1766 Mr. Moir, being in bad health, resigned from the vestry in Northampton and requested the vestry to employ another clergyman.

In the fall of 1766 he left North Carolina for the northern colonies in order to regain his health. He reported that his physical condition did not enable him to ride such a large parish. He visited New York, Suffolk, Va., and sailed for Great Britain in the spring of 1767. He left a reputation in the county more notable for his ability as a business man than that of a minister.



He was one of the commissioners who laid off the streets of Tarboro in 1760. Reverend B. E. Brown, now rector of the church in Tarboro, relates an incident which brings his memory down to comparatively modern times. Governor Henry T. Clark, of Edgecombe, in his early life was informed by an old man then residing in the county that he was baptized by the "Old Parson." The proof offered was the register of St. Mary's Chapel, then supposed to be in the possession of Charles Knight. Governor Clark then proceeded to Mr. Knight's in order to confirm the statement, but learned that the old book which had been thrown around the house for generations, had previously been used to make a fire. This act is one of the tragedies that writers experience.

Mr. Moir left the county with a population of 2,260 souls, of whom 1,220 were taxables. The report gathered by the Governor of the colony for presentation to the Society showed St. Mary's anxious for a minister. Accordingly, the Bishop of London commissioned Reverend Henry John Burgess, Jr., on recommendation of Governor Tryon, to take charge of the parish in Edgecombe County. Governor Tryon, in writing of the ordination of Reverend Burgess, said he expected much from his ministry.

The ministerial career of Mr. Burgess, however, was of short duration. After less than two years of ministerial work he went to Virginia, and became a schoolmaster, having the distinction of teaching Dr. Simmon J. Baker and President William H. Harrison. In fact very little is known of his activities, for in 1772 Reverend C. E. Taylor, of Northampton County, paid a visit to Edgecombe and stated that the parish had been for sometime without a minister. While in the county Mr. Taylor traveled 219 miles in the space of six days, and baptized 159 whites and four colored children in three days. He described conditions by saying the people in the county were very poor, while the parish was so extensive that there was little probability of a minister settling in the county.

From all indications gathered from early reports, especially that of Mr. Woodmason, the state of religion in Edgecombe and adjoining counties was lamentable. Governor Dobbs had labored to get a church built in each parish, convenient to each town, and to have the church matters settled on the plans prevailing in South Carolina. As early as 1755 the county had over 1,300 men in the

militia, representing a population of over 2,500 people, yet there was only one clergyman. Public invitations were frequently given to clergymen of England to come over and foster the religion of the mother country. There were only a few who ever came to Lord Granville's district. There were, at this time, at least two chapels in the county; one at Tarboro, and also one at Halifax before the Edgecombe parish was divided. At the latter place an old church was erected in the colonial days. Over the pulpit was to be seen a cross, a sacred symbol. The tombstone in the old churchyard described as late as 1850 was so ancient that the chiseled letters and the carvings were entirely obliterated.

It was reasonable to believe that the people had services at stated periods. The Reverend Thomas Burgess, who had become minister of Edgecombe Parish, Halifax County, in October, 1759, was too near the people in the vicinity of Tarboro not to have paid them at least an annual visit. The fact that he had identified himself with the material interests of the town of Tarboro by purchasing a lot when the town was laid off in 1760, gives reason to believe the existence of his spiritual interest in the people. The fact that the people were for the most part unappreciative, and the vestry refused to levy sufficient taxes for the maintenance of the ministers and churches, gave little encouragement to any one who came. Governor Dobbs, realizing the situation, proposed an act to pay clergymen out of the common funds of the colony. This naturally brought a protest on the part of the dissenters, who could not reconcile the act of paying for the support of a religion in which they took no active part.

Governor Martin, who succeeded Governor Dobbs, also had to confront this issue, not only in St. Mary's Parish, but in all the eastern counties. In 1774, therefore, in order to reduce the size of so large a parish, a new parish was cut off, which was named Elizabeth. St. Mary's Parish began, after the division, at the land of James Canes on Fishing Creek and extended to Richmond Bunns's on Tar River, thence to an old ferry, known as Christian Roes's ferry, on Great Contentnea. St. Mary's lay to the eastward of the old boundary, while Elizabeth Parish included all the territory in the westward direction. Sherwood Haywood, William Horn, and Etheldred Exum were appointed commissioners to determine the boundaries and to settle the disputes arising

from the adjustment of the taxes collected and distributed among the parishes.

The inducements being insufficient for clergymen to settle in the various parishes in the province, a law was passed about 1770 giving the minister a salary of 133 pounds, 6 shillings, and 8 pence proclamation money. In additions he received 40 shillings for preaching funeral sermons, 25 shillings for marrying a couple, while every parish was to purchase 200 acres of land as a Glebe for the use of the minister.

After the resignation of Mr. Burgess, except by infrequent visits by ministers in adjoining parishes, St. Mary's was entirely neglected. As the time of the Revolution approached, the church had grown weaker and weaker. The parish had had two ministers, Reverend Milton Holt and Reverend Samuel McDougal, who were reported as having been appointed to St. Mary's Parish and remained only a short time, but little is known of their services here. In 1775 Reverend Edward Dromgoole preached in St. Mary's and also Halifax County.

The neglect of the church soon caused a decay, while the interest of the faithful of the Established Church revived only when the Revolution began. The majority of the churchmen in the county remained faithful to the American cause. The peace which was declared in 1783 found the church neglected and almost gone, while the remnant of the supporters were without a leader and organization. A stigma rested upon all communicants because of the English origin of the church. All the royal Governors had been strong churchmen, and many had faithfully labored for the promotion of the church's interest. The dissenting element had grown numerically superior, and having a marked dislike for anything English, gave little opportunity for the surviving few churchmen to proclaim their religious convictions. In the meantime the Halifax convention of November, 1776, separated church and state, which proved a blessing in disguise to the church in North Carolina. It decreed that in the future no professing Christian of any denomination was under compulsion to support the church or clergy of any other denomination. Moreover, all Christians were to enjoy peace and undisturbed worship according to their own conscience. This declaration was the work of

dissenters, and was made with the object of assuring religious freedom.

Soon after the Revolution the church was reorganized on the American basis. The American church was, of course, the principal factor in reviving the local churches. The first need was a national organization. Efforts had been made before the Revolution to form an American Episcopate, but all efforts had failed. Peace was hardly declared before efforts were renewed. Religion had taken a decided turn when the battle for political freedom had also won religious freedom. There were men in the county who remembered the church with kind feeling, and those who had won the rights of speech on the battlefield against their former king.

A few years following the Revolution, Tarboro was destined to become the starting place for a reawakening of the Episcopal Church in the State.

Dr. William White, an eminent figure in the Episcopal Church after the Revolution, in 1789, wrote Governor Samuel Johnston of his desire to inaugurate a movement for the reorganization of the church. Governor Johnston, being a layman of the church, referred the letter to Charles Pettigrew. Governor Johnston and Mr. Pettigrew had for sometime been intimate friends, he being a member of Reverend Pettigrew's congregation at St. Paul's Church in Edenton. The contents of the letter voiced a desire to select some convenient place for the clergymen to meet and consult as to procedure to reawaken an interest in the church.

After the matter was referred to Mr. Pettigrew, he wrote letters to Dr. Cutting, of New Bern; Reverend Mr. Wilson, of Martin County, and Reverend Mr. Blount, residing on Tar River, expressing a desire that they meet at Tarboro on the second Thursday in May, 1790. He mentions this place as a central and convenient location. Accordingly, Mr. Pettigrew and Reverend James L. Wilson met in Tarboro on June 5, 1790, and held the first convention of the Episcopal Church in North Carolina. These two gentlemen were met in Tarboro by Dr. John Leigh and Mr. William Clements, who were residents and staunch churchmen. Reverend Mr. Pettigrew, in a letter addressed to Bishop White, regretted the fact that no more were in attendance, and that he had expected that as many as six clergymen would be



present. The idea was for a clergy and lay representation, in order that all phases of the church could be considered and a plan laid for arousing interest in church activity and organization. He commended Dr. Leigh and Mr. Clements very highly for their merit and character. Mr. Clements had the distinguished honor of becoming the secretary of the convention, while Dr. Leigh was appointed on a committee to draft a circular letter in answer to a letter written to the convention of Tarboro by the General Convention in Philadelphia. He was the layman appointed to represent the church in the State in the General Convention held in New York in September, 1792. He was honored by being put on the standing committee of the state of the church, which received applications and recommended candidates for Holy Orders.

The convention of June, 1790, above referred to, proceeded with business regardless of the scant number in attendance. The general meeting house<sup>1</sup> in Tarboro was used as the place of assembly. Reverend Mr. Wilson wrote Reverend Mr. Pettigrew on December 30, 1790, that the convention proposed more business than could be accomplished, the deliberations being carried on by two clergymen and two laymen who represented the entire State. One of the questions discussed was evidently the selection of a bishop. This seems to have been the one urgent need of the church at this time. However, Dr. Leigh wrote Mr. Pettigrew in March before the time for assembling in the next convention in October, 1791, that he thought it was something that might be deferred for sometime, but should it become necessary, he saw no logical reason why a resident of the State should not be elected. Mr. Leigh said, "If the appointment of a bishop will tend in any degree to raise once more the fallen state of our church, I am clearly convinced that it should be done." From this gathering seeds were sown which later bore a fruitful harvest. The convention which was to have met at Tarboro October, 1791, never convened for the lack of the presence of sufficient numbers, and also because of Mr. Pettigrew's sickness.

In a letter to Bishop White in Philadelphia Mr. Pettigrew wrote: "I had determined to be at our next Episcopal Convention, which was to meet in October, 1791, but being seized with a certain

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<sup>1</sup> This meeting house was evidently built by the Episcopal congregation and was subsequently abandoned by them, due to the lack of local interest.

ague two or three days before I was to set out, I found it out of my power to give my attendance, as the distance was about one hundred miles."

Mr. Pettigrew, in the meanwhile, had written a clergyman who had been in attendance to learn what was accomplished at the convention, and was informed that due to insufficient numbers the convention never organized. During this year Dr. William Ormond visited the town and held a profitable meeting in the public meeting house in Tarboro. Mr. Ormond was connected with the rise and growth of the church at Tarboro. He was born in Dobbs County in 1769, and was a man of quick perceptions, generous, and affectionate. He also possessed an abundance of natural gifts, was striking in appearance, and was a faithful consecrated worker. His intellectual ability proved a great asset and assisted him in forming a systematic organization, of which his church was badly in need.

Two years later the third convention met in Tarboro. Reverend James L. Wilson was president and William Clements was again secretary. This convention made considerable more progress in the movement for a church reorganization. A State committee was appointed, and a circular was published calling a fourth convention to be held in Tarboro in May, 1794. The convention of 1793 was the largest held since the Revolution, but consisted of only six persons; Dr. Halling, the principal spirit of the convention, of New Bern; Reverend Gurley, of Murfreesborough; Reverend Wilson, of Williamston; Mr. William Clements, Dr. Leigh, of Tarboro, and Mr. F. Green, of Craven County. There is conclusive evidence that the county at this time had not more than two or three communicants. Of these Mr. Clements was formerly a Presbyterian.

The principal purpose of the convention of 1793 was not realized. The need for a bishop was urgently stressed, but the lukewarmness of the few members prevented any action. Dr. Halling in writing to Reverend Mr. Pettigrew, December 16, 1793, said: "You may readily suppose that it would have been unavoidable in us to appoint a bishop-elect." He then explains the matter by saying: "The smallness of our number would have subjected *him* to reproach, and our church also, if anything possibly can, after it has evidenced such want of zeal, for the professors of our re-

ligion have not on this occasion even shown themselves to be lukewarm."

In order to carry out the purpose of electing a bishop an advertisement, accompanied by a circular, was sent to influential and responsible parties in each county to arouse an interest in a convention to meet for this purpose. Suggestions was also made to elect a vestry in each county, and to appoint lay leaders where a clergyman was not in evidence. The vestries were requested to elect delegates to attend a convention in Tarboro in the following year.

In the meantime, Reverend Mr. Pettigrew was approached by Dr. Halling in reference to his acceptance of the Episcopacy of North Carolina, since it was the general wish that he be elected. Dr. Halling expressed himself strongly in his favor by saying: "My exertions shall not be spared on this occasion and you must not refuse."

The efforts of Dr. Halling to arouse a zeal and fervor for the Episcopal cause deserves all praise. One would gather from his writings that his heart and mind were aflame for the purpose of creating a workable and permanent organization that would promote church endeavor. It was through his activities that representatives of clergy and laity were induced to meet in convention at Tarboro on May 28, 1794. At this convention Dr. Halling received what appeared to be a realization of his hope—the election of a bishop. Meeting in conjunction with about five clergymen and eight laymen, Dr. Halling carried out his purpose of having the Reverend Charles Pettigrew elected bishop.

Mr. Pettigrew was born in Pennsylvania March 20, 1743, received his education in North Carolina, and became a school teacher of no small merit. His inclinations led him to become a minister, and following the dictation of his conscience, he gave up his teaching and went to England in 1774 for ordination. He returned to America to find the American Colonies in the throes of revolution. His services in the established church were recognized by all who knew him. He built Pettigrew Chapel out of his own purse and officiated there, in Edenton, and in all the eastern counties. His efforts after the Revolution were chiefly spent in attempting to organize a diocese in the State. The results of his

consecrated efforts were the conventions held in Tarboro 1790, 1793, 1794.

Following his election as bishop of North Carolina, he proceeded to Philadelphia in order to be ordained by the convention, then in session at that place. The method of travel was slow and rough. Mr. Pettigrew succeeded in reaching Norfolk, Va., only to find that an epidemic of yellow fever had terrorized the town. He was delayed here until it became too late to accomplish his mission at Philadelphia, and he returned, dying April 8, 1807, before the next general convention met. Thus by an act of Providence he missed being ordained the first bishop of North Carolina. Mr. Pettigrew was a strong friend of Dr. Leigh, of Tarboro, and one of the best and most beautiful portrayals of his character and the physical suffering which he experienced during the latter part of his life and after his election to the Episcopacy, is shown in a letter to him. This letter also contains a description of Lake Scuppernong, located in Tyrrell and Washington counties. Mr. Pettigrew wrote: "I write you from Bonaroa,<sup>1</sup> a name I have given my situation on the lake. I sit under the shade of three beautiful hollies. The surrounding scene is truly romantic. On one side the prospects toward the water is very beautiful and extensive, while the gentle breezes play over the surface of the crystal fluid, and render the air grateful for respiration, now when the sun sheds his warmest influence upon the earth—it being the meridian hour. In three angles of the improvement, the woods are luxuriantly tall, and dressed in a foliage of deepest verdure, while the cultivated field exhibits the greatest power of vegetative nature, and arrests my eye from every other object. Let me, then, pursuant to the suggestion of gratitude, lift my eyes and my heart in a devout aspiration of thanksgiving and praise to the indulgent author of my existence and of these blessings of which I am an unworthy partaker in common with my species. But am I not growing too serious for you? I hope not. We have our troubles. This was never designed to be a heaven for us. We are therefore crossed, that we may extend our views to a brighter world, where there is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading, in reserve for him that overcometh the

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<sup>1</sup> Bonaroa was also the name of Rev. Mr. Pettigrew's plantation.



world, the flesh, the devil. Two heavy crosses I have, one a poor crazy constitution, and a miserable chump of an overseer, whom I am obliged to oversee."

The premature death of Mr. Pettigrew obviously retarded the progress of a stable church organization in the State. It was nearly thirty years after his death before a diocese was established and a bishop of North Carolina ordained. One of the marked hindrances to the Episcopal Church in Edgecombe and the State, and one which had retarded its success from 1790 to 1833, was the want of a bishop who could over look the church organization and establish a ministry to remove the indifference and lethargy which was prevalent among the people.

In the meantime, it appears that the county was not without ministerial services. An old manuscript, supposed to have been one of Reverend Mr. Pettigrew's writings, mentions the names of Reverend James L. Wilson as minister of Martin and Edgecombe counties, and also Rev. Nathaniel Blount, of Pitt and Edgecombe, in 1795. Reverend Mr. Wilson was ordained by Bishop White in the year 1789. He had been a strong advocate for the election of a bishop for North Carolina in the convention at Tarboro, and was the only minister who attended all four meetings at Tarboro. He was the president of one and had been selected as a delegate to the general convention. It is believed that he continued to visit Edgecombe until about the year 1800.

The Reverend Mr. Blount also paid frequent visits to the county during the trying days succeeding the ill-fated attempt to organize an Episcopacy in the State by the conventions at Tarboro. The conditions following 1794 were indeed deplorable. In spite of this fact credence is given to the tradition that a church was built in Tarboro between 1790 and 1800. This must have been the church which replaced the one built on Tar River, which had decayed by the close of the Revolution, since a church was torn down in 1856. This church has been repeatedly mentioned as a public meeting house, and was used by all the denominations after the Episcopalians ceased to use it. Bishop J. B. Cheshire is of the opinion that this church was used by the conventions which met in Tarboro 1790-1794. The Reverend Mr. Whitfield preached in this church in the early nineteenth century. Tradition mentions the fact that the stone over the grave of Reverend John Philips, who

had been active in the church in the county, bore this inscription: "Rector of this church." The bell in the old Missionary Baptist Church <sup>1</sup> on Hendricks Creek and adjacent to the Tarboro Power House was taken from this church prior to the time it was torn down.

This church roll contained names of members handed down from St. Mary's Chapel, viz: Suggs, Tools, Irwins, Haywoods, Penders, Knights, Johnsons, and Philips. Dr. John Leigh, who had been active in the conventions of Tarboro, and was a prominent physician and politician, still entertained hope for the church. There was also William Clements, and Robert White, a brilliant lawyer, and James Adams, the last two having acquired considerable eminence in politics and who represented town and county in the efforts for greater church activity. General Thomas Blount, who entertained George Washington, also lived in the county and displayed an interest in the welfare of the church after 1794. There were quite a few others who had been noted Revolutionary patriots, among whom were James W. Clark, and Blake Baker, once Attorney General of the State. The presence of these men no doubt induced for a time the visits of various clergymen who lived in adjacent parishes.

There was, however, little desire for local organization. Much indifference existed in electing vestrymen during the period between 1794 and 1819. Attempts had been made to induce the believers in the church to elect twelve vestrymen according to the conventional proceeding enacted in Tarboro in 1793. Each county was admonished to elect a vestry and also to appoint two delegates to attend the various State conventions and also to elect two of the vestrymen to serve as church wardens. If any were ever selected in Edgecombe, the local organization ceased when the second church was abandoned about 1805.<sup>2</sup>

A new period in the history of the church began in Edgecombe about 1817 under the consecrated efforts of Reverend Adam Empie. A convention was held in New Bern of that year. In this convention the remaining and scattered clergy was bound together in bonds of revision and the existing churches were inter-

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<sup>1</sup> This church was originally a Primitive Baptist Church until the split occurred.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Jeremiah Battle, writing about the county in 1811, says that there were no churches but Baptist and Methodist.

ested in the movement for a better organization. Only four parishes were represented in the convention of 1817, but in the course of two years the spirit of revival seized the minds of the people and an earnest reawakening ensued.

A congregation was organized at Tarboro by Reverend John Philips in 1819 and in that year it applied for admission to the diocese at the convention held at Wilmington. The people who constituted this congregation were doubtlessly the remnant of the colonial parish of St. Mary's or their descendants. At the time of the church reorganization the names of the Clarks, Nashes, Suggses, Tooles, Irwins, Penders, and others were still in evidence, and these same names are not uncommon on the parish register of this day.

Bishop Cheshire is of opinion that the name Trinity Church should not have been applied to the new church, but that the name of St. Mary's should have been retained. In this view Bishop Cheshire in all probability is correct. The retention of the old name of the church would have been most reasonable, thus retaining the old association with both the church and its founders. The failure to give the name of St. Mary's was in all probability due to the fact that since the old church went down by reason of indifference and inactivity, the name St. Mary's had been applied to a parish in Eastern North Carolina, and in order to avoid confusion arising from identical names, the name of Trinity was given. In like manner the change from Trinity to Calvary in 1833 was perhaps attributable to a similar cause.

Trinity Church beginning with 1819 entered an existence, which at first gave signs of useful and continued growth. The Reverend Mr. Philips, the rector, was a man of considerable ability and commendable piety. He had been associated with Reverend George Strebeck and acted as his assistant in the New Bern Academy until the year 1814, at which time he was ordained by Bishop Moore, of Virginia. He remained in Virginia until 1818 and then became a missionary in North Carolina. His activities were not confined to Tarboro, for after organizing the church here, he became active in the churches at Warrenton, Blount's Chapel, and Washington. He also gave occasional visits to Hillsboro, Raleigh, Oxford, Scotland Neck, and Williamsboro. He was interested in organizing a church at Raleigh, which was

also made up of some of Edgecombe's citizens who had been affiliated with the church at Tarboro. Notable among them were the Haywoods, and Mrs. Blount, the widow of Honorable Thomas Blount.

Bishop Moore, of Virginia, who had consented to supervise the diocese of North Carolina, in making his visit to North Carolina in 1819 visited Tarboro and, according to his journal, preached several times here. He must have passed through the town more than once, because he journeyed to Greenville and Washington, and his course of travel necessitated his having to return this way. He also attended the State convention in 1820 which convened at Edenton, and in all probability at that visited the church in Tarboro.

About 1822 the Reverend Mr. Philips was in failing health, but continued his ministration until 1823, when he returned to Virginia. He died in that State in 1831. The year he left the county a convention was called to meet in Salisbury, and Dr. Ravenscroft was elected to the episcopate. It is disappointing to find from the list of the parishes represented that Edgecombe was not among the number. Trinity Church had gone down.

After the decay, which followed from 1823 to 1833, there remains little to be said. The people in the county had evidently lost all hope after Reverend John Philips' departure, and being of an indifferent nature neglected the welfare of the church. Bishop Ravenscroft records in his journal the account of a visit to Tarboro in 1826 and says, "The prospects of a church in this place have declined so far that no reasonable expectation of its survival should be entertained."

The year of 1833 marked the beginning of a continuous existence of an organized church. This year also records the first real vestry which existed in the county after the Revolution. At this time the name of Calvary Church was given, when the old congregation had a reorganization and applied for admission to the diocese of North Carolina, when the convention met in Warrenton on May 20, 1833. The Reverend Mr. Norwood became the rector, and Theophilus Parker, Spencer D. Cotton, Benjamin J. Spruill, James R. Lloyd, and Richard Hines, vestrymen. These men were then very prominent in politics and business circles of the State and county.



In 1834 Mr. Thomas Burgess, the grandson of Reverend Thomas Burgess, conveyed a lot in the town of Tarboro, the one purchased in 1760 by Reverend Mr. Burgess, clergyman of Edgecombe Parish in Halifax, to the vestry of Calvary Church.<sup>1</sup> It was the intention of the church to build a place of worship, but this purpose was not carried out until several years later. At the same time Theophilus Parker, a vestryman, gave an adjoining lot. The church which was already being used continued to answer the purpose of the congregation until after the war between the States. Frequent references have been made to this church as the "Old Church." In 1849 a eulogy of Ex-President Polk was made there by W. F. Dancy. The committee on arrangement was composed of H. T. Clark, who was a strong churchman at the time; R. E. McNair, John Norfleet, John F. Speight, and Harmon Ward. The notice of the occasion read as follows: "On the life and character of James K. Polk pronounced by William F. Dancy, at the old church in Tarboro, July 24, 1849."

Sometime after the gift of a lot by Mr. Parker, the vestry bought a lot, and in 1858 still another lot was given to the church by John S. Dancy, R. R. Bridgers, William F. Dancy, John L. Bridgers, William S. Battle, and Baker Staton.

The ministration of Reverend Mr. Norwood was of short duration, for he left towards the close of his first year. The congregation, however, held together and had a strong organization in its vestry. After Reverend Mr. Norwood left the vestry requested the services of Mr. John Singletary, who at the time had not been ordained. He was ordained April 6, 1834, by Bishop Ives, and began his duties as rector of Calvary Church the following Sunday. Reverend Mr. Singletary left the charge after about two years and went to Warrenton.

In the meantime, the vestry of Calvary Church began a movement to build a church on the four lots which today constitute the two-acre churchyard. James R. Lloyd, Spencer D. Cotton, Richard Hines, and Theophilus Parker each gave \$250.00 to the cause. The building was completed November, 1840, at a cost of \$2,200.00, the congregation and friends subscribing the remaining \$1,200.00. On March 8, 1840, Bishop Ives consecrated the church. This edifice remains today and is commonly known as the chapel.

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<sup>1</sup> This lot was used as a burying ground.

In the year 1842 the Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire was called to the parish, and the history of the church centers around his ministrations for over fifty years. The Reverend J. B. Cheshire was born in Edenton, N. C., December 29, 1814, and on his mother's side he was a descendant of the well-known Blount family which was prominently connected with the Protestant Episcopal Church from organization of the first parish vestry in 1701. He received his early education at the old Edenton Academy. After his father's death he studied law and was subsequently admitted to the bar and practiced in Edenton court from 1837 to 1839. He then abandoned the law for the ministry. In 1840 he was ordained deacon, and priest in 1841. He then acted as missionary in Halifax and Bertie counties for one year, when he accepted charge of Trinity Church at Scotland Neck and Calvary Church at Tarboro.

When Rev. Mr. Cheshire took charge there were only six members of the church. About eight years afterwards the report of the church census states that Tarboro had one Episcopal Church and aggregate congregation of 400, and church property valued at \$2,000.00.

On March 16, 1856, Bishop Atkinson visited Tarboro and preached two sermons and administered confirmation to several persons. The church had been aroused, and the power for good which had been dormant for almost fifty years was fully alive. The slaves were beginning to receive spiritual attention, efforts were also being made to establish services at Rocky Mount. Mr. William Murphy, who evidently was a man of considerable piety and influence, was appointed by Bishop Atkinson to officiate at Rocky Mount.

Bishop Atkinson also relates in his journal of having preached in Rocky Mount in 1856 and administered the communion; in the afternoon he preached to a congregation of slaves belonging to Mr. Battle. Prior to the opening scenes of the war, the ministerial work among the slaves in the county was postponed on account of indifference shown for the work. The work of the church at Tarboro continued without interruption. It is true some of its congregation was absent doing duty upon the field of battle and in the legislative halls, both in the State and Confederacy. R. R. Bridgers was in Richmond, John L. Bridgers led his

troops at Bethel, W. S. Battle in the various conventions, as well as others who gave allegiance to the cause of the South.

Prior to the beginning of hostilities the church at Tarboro had experienced considerable progress and an increase in numbers. A new church was accordingly proposed and a movement began in 1860. The church was to be of brick. By early summer, 1861, the work was well under way, with the walls and both spires nearly completed. The *Tarboro Southerner*, in commenting on the work in March, said that the church would be completed by the following spring. The hurried preparation for war and the urgent need of men and material checked the work until after the closing scenes of 1865. The church gave its bell in response to the demands of the Confederate Government for metal.

By January, 1867, a sufficient amount of money was subscribed to complete the new church. The building committee consisted of Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire, R. Chapman, J. H. Bowditch, William F. Dancy, Matthew Weddell, N. J. Pittman, John L. Bridgers, and H. B. Bryan. In the latter part of the year 1867 the structure was completed. A new bell, weighing 1,200 pounds, was received and paid for by the generosity and liberality of the citizens of the town and county. The church at the time of its completion was not surpassed in architectural beauty by any known church in the State or in the South. The cost of construction was \$25,000.00. It received numerous editorial comments in the larger State papers. Calvary churchyard, consisting of two acres, soon became one of the chief attractions of Tarboro. The ground was planted with numerous trees and shrubs of rare species which were collected from various sources. The Reverend Mr. Cheshire, possessing a natural love for trees and flowers, devoted much care and attention to the planting. The churchyard was laid off with attractive walks, bordered with beautiful evergreens, creeping vines, roses and a great variety of flowers. The walls of the church are covered with English ivy, a fitting adornment to the graceful lines of the structure. The whole a spot of unsurpassed beauty. All of this being the loving work of Dr. Cheshire, and memorial of his devotion and fine Christian character.

After the war the local church took on new life and received inspiration at the general convention of 1865. The Reverend

Dr. Cheshire and Mr. William H. Battle, from Edgecombe, represented the State with other delegates. At the convention of 1866 the Reverend Dr. Cheshire and General William R. Cox were appointed on a committee to consider the church's attitude toward the races. Their sentiment was to "commend the people of color to the continued kindness and good will of the churchmen of the diocese." Two men of the county—father and son—were destined to become eminent and influential churchmen. The Reverend Dr. Joseph B. Cheshire was active in church endeavor and was present at most all conventional proceedings. He served on the committee that reported on the matter of electing an assistant bishop, which could not be legally done unless an amendment of the canons of the General Convention was made. He was on the committee which prepared the learned treatise on the "Usage and precedent concerning the Episcopate in the early days of the church." The Reverend Mr. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., in his early ministry began to give evidence of his ability. He succeeded Dr. Marshall, the first historiographer of the diocese, and remained in this office with honor to himself and his church until he was elected bishop in 1893. For this eminent position he was qualified. He was a graduate of Trinity College in 1869, when only nineteen years of age, and received his master's degree there in 1872. He received the degree of doctor of divinity from the University of North Carolina in 1890, and also from the University of the South in 1894. Like his father, he studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1872, and had an active practice for six years. Like his father he then entered the ministry, and was ordained deacon in 1878, and priest in 1880. His first pastorate was at Chapel Hill where he remained three years. In 1881 he assumed the charge at St. Peter's in Charlotte and had an active ministry there until 1893. During this year he was consecrated coadjutor bishop, and October 15th became bishop after the death of Bishop Lyman. He is a trustee of the University of the South and has made valuable contributions to his church's history. His principle work was the "History of the Episcopal Church in the Confederate States."

Under the direction of the Reverend Dr. Cheshire the church in the county experienced its greatest growth. In 1870, in coöperation with Reverend Mr. Benton, who exercised untiring



energy and perseverance, success was made in establishing a chapel at Stantonburg. Bishop Atkinson visited the chapel on April 4, 1870, three days after its completion. The Reverend Mr. Benton preached here over a month and officiated over the chapels in the eastern counties.

In 1883 the efforts which had been made to establish a church in Hickory Fork Township materialized in the construction of St. Mary's Chapel; the name was given in honor of the first church in the county. The people in the township without regard to sect supported the movement. Mr. John W. Howard donated the land, while popular subscription financed the building. In April, 1883, just before the church was completed, the Right Reverend T. B. Lyman, bishop of North Carolina, held the first services in the chapel. The Reverend W. J. Smith was the principal promoter of the project and reported a flourishing Sunday school with considerable interest.

At the same time a movement for a colored church service was arranged and in 1880 a colored Episcopal minister, Reverend Cumings, from Missouri, appeared in the county. He was reported to be a good preacher, and a man of culture. He preached on several days in Windsor, soon after being stationed in Tarboro, to a crowded house. His appearance evidently created a sensation, according to the account of the local paper, which declared "a black face and a white gown is somewhat of a novelty in a pulpit in this place."<sup>1</sup>

By the year 1879 this body of Christians had three meeting houses and several hundred communicants. Local interest was beginning to be in evidence, by the springing up of auxiliaries in the church. Shortly after the days of reconstruction the men of the church at Tarboro organized a guild. This organization was designed for charitable purposes and gave several hundred dollars to the Episcopal Orphanage. It staged plays and entertainments by local talent. Tarboro furnished excellent material, and its amateur plays received worthy support and hearty commendation. In addition concerts were given by the ladies. On several occasions the women of the church gave a series of tableaux and a

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<sup>1</sup> The colored church was successfully conducted from this beginning. Under the worthy efforts of an honorable man of color, Rev. — Perry, the negro church had a useful career.

concert for aiding in the collections of funds for the poor and also to assist in financing the Stonewall Cemetery for the Confederate dead at Winchester, Va.

In the meantime, various missions were being established in the county under the earnest and unselfish efforts of S. S. Nash, Charles F. Clayton, Frank Hart, J. W. Forbes, George Pender, Newett Webb, and others. In 1897 Grace Church at Lawrence was erected, and Mr. S. S. Nash became lay reader. In 1910 Calvary Chapel at Hart Cotton Mill was constructed, with Mr. Frank Hart as superintendent. In 1912 St. Andrew's Mission under Mr. J. W. Forbes as superintendent was constructed. During the same year Mr. S. S. Nash became superintendent of St. Matthew's Mission, which was newly built. In 1914 St. Anne's Mission was founded by Mr. George Pender, while a year later St. Saviour's Church was erected and Mr. Newett Webb was placed in charge as lay leader. The next year St. Joseph's Mission was organized.<sup>1</sup> In addition the church showed the true missionary spirit in conducting services at the county home for the aged and infirm who were unable to attend services elsewhere.

After the retirement from active service of the Reverend Dr. Cheshire in 1889 the church at Tarboro was served by the following ministers: Poffenberger, Hoffman, Hebbard, Gamble, Harding, and B. E. Brown, who is now the present incumbent, and through his efforts the church received a stimulus for erecting the more recent missions in the county. Calvary Parish numbers about 450 communicants; and at the various chapels in the county Sunday schools are regularly conducted and services held by clergy and laymen of Calvary Church.

At the meeting of the Diocesan Convention of 1889 the Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., very appropriately offered a resolution that the one hundredth anniversary of the election of the first bishop in North Carolina be observed by a celebration at Tarboro, the first bishop having been elected there. The Reverend Cheshire, Jr., Mr. Samuel Nash, and Judge Philips, of Tarboro, were appointed on a committee with others to carry word to the diocese of East Carolina and to give them an invitation to be

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<sup>1</sup> Only three of these Missions—Grace Church, St. Mary's at Speed, and St. Matthew's—are regularly organized missions, and have recognition, separate from the church at Tarboro. They are kept up principally by the efforts of Mr. S. S. Nash. The other missions are on the communicant list of Calvary Parish.

present, Mr. Nash acting as special messenger. The joint celebration in Tarboro lasted for three days, beginning May 16, 1890. The joint centennial convention constitutes a history in itself as copied from the state papers. A general review of the history of the church was elaborately discussed in valuable historical contributions by various men of the church. Judge Philips, of Tarboro, delivered the address of welcome.

The church is maintaining its past dignity and great work for good under the ministration of the Reverend Bertram E. Brown.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PRESBYTERIANS AND SONS OF TEMPERANCE

Sometime previous to 1750 it is commonly believed that Presbyterian colonists settled in Orange, Rowan, Mecklenburg, and what is now Granville County. In the latter, the eloquent Pattillo gave a remarkable revelation of the worship of Christ and had a wonderful career.

Immediately after 1750 Presbyterianism made its appearance in Edgecombe County with the Scot-Irish immigration. There were, during the Revolution, some Scotch merchants in Tarboro who may have adhered to this belief. The Reverend James Campbell was the first ordained minister to live in North Carolina. Of his activities in this county nothing is preserved. The Reverend Hugh McAden was the first permanent missionary in the colony and for aught one knows was the first to reach Edgecombe and to leave the impress of his personality upon the religious life of the adherents of his faith.

Petitions had been sent from North Carolina to the Synod of Philadelphia as early as 1744 with the records showing that the supplications came "from many people." The records, however, do not give any indication as to the locality of the people. In response to this inquiry two missionaries were sent to visit Virginia and North Carolina in 1753. There is no record of where they went. It is unfortunate that, like Bishop Asbury and others, these pioneer ministers did not keep diaries. In 1754 a few Presbyterian settlers came to Edgecombe, and four ministers were sent to Virginia and North Carolina, and like their predecessors no account of them is preserved.

The known activities of the Reverend McAden are of considerable interest. His first trip touching the county followed the principal road leading from Richmond, Va., to Wilmington, N. C. From Richmond he came by the way of what is now Weldon, where he crossed Tar River. This would cause him to pass through the northern and western borders of the county. This section was, with a few isolated exceptions, sparsely settled. Reverend McAden was a Pennsylvanian by birth, his people coming from the north of Ireland. He attended school at Nassau





TARBORO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Hall and sat at the feet of the famous instructor, John Blair, of New Castle Presbytery.<sup>1</sup> He was graduated in 1753, was licensed 1755, and was ordained by the Presbytery in 1757. In 1759 he was transferred from his Presbytery to the Hanover Presbytery in the South. The memoranda of his early life was destroyed by British soldiers in January, 1781, while he was living in Caswell County. The journal of his first missionary tour, which lasted several months, was the only document preserved.

In August, 1755, Mr. McAden preached on Eno River, which runs through Durham and Wake counties. It was probably in the nearest point of Granville County that he was then ministering. There was also a house of worship on Eno River built by the Presbyterians of Granville County. The people in the vicinity of Tar River heard of him and "earnestly entreated" him to visit them. Mr. McAden states in his journal that he started the same evening, Tuesday, August 12th, with his guide and went as far as Bogan's on Flat River that day. He had journeyed twenty miles south. The following morning he commenced his trip and rode to "old" Sherman's on Tar River. He preached that afternoon to a small company "who seemed generally attentive, and some affected."

The next day he proceeded to Grassy Creek, where he preached to a congregation in a Baptist meeting house. Following his preaching here he began a trip to Fishing Creek, and was accompanied by his host "old" Mr. Lawrence.<sup>2</sup> Here Mr. McAden relates of going with Mr. Lawrence to Fishing Creek, to the Baptist yearly meeting, and on Saturday and Sunday preached to large and interested audiences. "Here," said Mr. McAden, "I think the power of God appeared something conspicuous and the word seemed to fall with power." He was persuaded to preach again Sunday evening, and on Monday he preached again.

The early association of Mr. McAden with the Baptists was not uncommon nor unusual. In many respects their doctrine was identical, especially that of the doctrine of predestination. He speaks highly in favor of his friend Mr. Lawrence.

The following April Mr. McAden made a trip to the Pamlico River, making his way upward. On the 7th of this month he

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<sup>1</sup> This school later became Westminster College.

<sup>2</sup> Evidently Joshua Lawrence's father.

reached Edgecombe County again, but this time from the South. He rode to Mr. Barrow's home near Red Banks, where he preached to "a pretty large company of people of various sorts, but very few Presbyterians." The same evening he rode up the Tar River to Mr. Mace's, "who was a man of considerable note, and a Presbyterian." This is the first actual account of a Presbyterian in the county who was mentioned by name. Mr. Mace was the father of William Mace, a large planter and slave owner. His name is mentioned on the Inferior Court Records at Tarboro as having been summoned to appear in a test case of valuation of slaves. An incident of slave killing is also mentioned in connection with his name elsewhere in this volume.

Mr. McAden remained here until Sunday, April 11th, and preached in the vicinity. On Tuesday he rode a considerable distance to Mr. Toole's, on Tar River, where Bishop Asbury had mentioned stopping frequently. The next day he reached Edgecombe courthouse and in all probability held services there. Tarboro, it will be remembered, was only a small village, and the courthouse was at Redman's Old Field.

After leaving the courthouse he went to Fishing Creek, and on the 16th of April rode ten miles up the creek, where he was received "kindly by Baptist friends he had made through the county last fall." Mr. McAden left the county after sowing the first seeds of ministerial work. There is no record of his ever visiting the county again.

There is some probability that Mr. Pattilo, who became pastor of Nut-Bush and Grassy Creek Churches in Granville County, visited the county from 1780 to 1790. The Presbyterians, however, were evidently without any church organization during this time.<sup>1</sup> The few of this belief, who were in the county, brought the doctrine from Virginia, New Jersey, and abroad. The area of Edgecombe, according to its geographical location, was in the jurisdiction of the Orange Presbytery, but the minutes of the Synod which met on Fishing Creek in 1801 contain no record of any congregation at Tarboro or elsewhere in Edgecombe.

The period between 1760 and 1866 is blank, so far as the history of the Presbyterians in Edgecombe County is concerned. It

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<sup>1</sup> In 1810 there were only churches of two denominations, the Baptist and Methodist.



is probable, however, that visiting ministers made infrequent visits through the county and preached in the public meeting house for the benefit of those who held the Presbyterian faith. At the beginning of the year 1867 the Reverend Mr. Dalton, who was pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Washington, N. C., began his visits to Tarboro. The Methodist Church was opened to him and in his series of visits he preached in this church. Upon his arrival he found three ladies<sup>1</sup> who had been members of the Presbyterian Church and were still loyal to this faith. In 1870 there being no church, a movement began to raise funds to erect a house of worship. By July 15, 1870, \$2,500.00 had been raised by popular subscription and a plea for \$1,000.00 more was issued with favorable results.

In 1869 verbal permission was given by the commissioners of the town of Tarboro to erect a church for the Presbyterians on the northwest corner of lot 64 in the old burying ground. The church was to pay \$1.00 per annum for the use of the lot.

Under the ministrations of Mr. Dalton, the three ladies were induced to carry out the design of a church building. On February 15, 1874, a church was organized with fifteen members, with James D. Cummings and Henry A. Walker as elders, and Orren Williams and Edward R. Stamps as deacons.

During, 1861, Miss Anna Ragland Stamps, the daughter of Dr. Thomas Stamps, a reputable physician of Melton, Caswell County, N. C., was united in marriage to the late Judge Howard, of Tarboro. Mrs. Howard was reared in a strong Presbyterian family and directed the energy of Judge Howard, who at the time was not a member of any church, into Presbyterian endeavor. Mrs. Howard became the most prominent supporter of the church movement, and with the assistance of others, succeeded in erecting a church in 1874 on the site of the present building at the corner of St. James and St. Patrick Streets, of Tarboro.

The Orange Presbytery met in Tarboro in the Presbyterian Church in 1874. The opening sermon was preached by Reverend Jacob Doll. A large congregation was in attendance, while eighteen ministers and seventeen ruling elders represented the various churches in the Presbytery.

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Anna Howard, the wife of late Judge Howard, was one.

In March, 1878, that part of the town lot that was verbally rented to the church, was conveyed by deed to the Presbyterian Church. The primary and provisional clause of the deed of conveyance was that it should be used for divine worship and for the use of the ministry and the membership of the Presbyterian Church.

Under the pastorate of Dr. J. N. Howard Summerell the church experienced a rapid growth and increasing influence. His activities were not confined to Tarboro, but his missionary inclinations led him to the various towns in the State. It was through his missionary efforts that the foundation was laid for the Presbyterian churches at Greenville and Falkland in Pitt County. Soon after the beginning of his pastorate Edgecombe began to respond to the doctrines of Presbyterianism. A church was organized at Leggetts, known as Olivet Church. This church grew in number and influence until its membership reached forty active church workers. Theodore Fountain became elder of this church and William Fly and Arthur Fountain were at one time deacons. The church is one of the neatest and one of the best small churches in the county.

In the spring of 1911 the missionary and church endeavor of the Presbyterians resulted in the establishment of a Sunday school at Pinetops. A revival meeting had been held in Pinetops sometime previous to this by Reverend G. W. Beck and the result of the revival showed the good accomplished. In the fall of the same year a church was organized, with Benjamin Brown and E. Y. Lovelace as elders, and L. W. and J. A. Wiggins as deacons. The church enjoys a nice building and has about forty-five members.

Meanwhile the missionary field of Orange Presbytery, as organized prior to 1801, was more than twice as large as the missionary territory of the four other Presbyteries in the Synod of North Carolina. At a session at Rocky Mount in October, 1888, the Orange Presbytery addressed a letter of relief to the Synod. A convention met immediately afterwards and suggested a redistribution of the territory. Subsequently, a new Presbytery, styled the Presbytery of Albemarle was erected, which included Edgecombe.

In the meantime Dr. Summerell's efforts at Tarboro were rewarded with substantial growth. R. C. Brown, a prominent merchant of Tarboro, became an elder, while Orren Williams was superintendent of the thriving Sunday school for many years. He became one of the most active members of the church. One of the strongest and most useful members at Tarboro was F. S. Royster. He also became an elder and devoted his money and time in furthering the interests of the church. He also served as a trustee of Davidson College until 1893. These able men and others with the assistance of Mrs. Anna Howard, Mrs. Anna McNair, and Mrs. Don Williams laid the foundation for a noble work which has been continued by descendants.

W. Stamps Howard and W. A. Hart for several years conducted the Sunday school at Leggetts, while Elder Harry Smith and Deacon C. A. Johnson were active in the Sunday school at Pinetops. The efforts of the laymen of the church have been felt in various sections of the county, and under their inspiration a nice chapel was erected at Runnymede Mills in 1904. R. B. Peters, an elder, with the coöperation of the earnest ladies of the church, have faithfully and incessantly labored in the promotion of this Sunday school.

George Howard, W. Stamps Howard and their sisters have, with conscientious efforts, carried out the designs and work which was begun by their mother, Mrs. Anna Stamps Howard. In 1909 the present spacious and beautiful church at Tarboro was erected by them as a memorial to their parents. The building was finished at an approximate cost of \$30,000.00 and an organ of unique design at a cost of \$5,500.00 was installed. The church in 1914 had a membership of 200 that compares favorably with any church in useful service. George Howard was the superintendent of the Sunday school, and at one time treasurer for the church.

Among the ministers who have served this church were Reverend Dr. W. D. Morton, who was at one time moderator, and J. S. Ballou.

#### SONS OF TEMPERANCE

The organization known as the Sons of Temperance seems to have been an outgrowth of an agitation for sobriety and the temperate use of liquor. The movement was nonsectarian and as a popular movement received the support of the leading citizens

in the county. The earliest day of its existence in the county was in 1840. The agitation began in that year for a better moral community and the elimination of the evil of drink. The organization also had as one of its leading issues the better support of schools and education. Both young and old of all churches and citizens gave the movement hearty support. Many branches of the society were organized in the county. At Temperance Hall in Edgecombe County a large and growing organization held its meeting. In Tarboro there was also another, and in 1853 one reads that the members of Farm Creek Division of the Sons of Temperance "will celebrate their anniversary on Saturday, 28th of May, and that Brother James L. Cotton and others were expected to deliver addresses."

Similar to many other good worthy movements, the organization soon became involved in religious controversies with resultant evil instead of wholesome and effective good. The country then, as in more recent times, was being generally canvassed by temperance lecturers who were employed by the various church organizations in the State. The Temperance Society had enjoyed only a few years' existence before men pronounced in their temperance reform made their appearance in Edgecombe. It was to be expected as a natural result of things that these men were to be met with opposition. Especially in these days opposition not only came from the confirmed moral wreck, who had drowned his life with degradation and drink, but men of all walks of life had grave doubts as to the wisdom of absolute tetotalism.

The matter would have been ignored had not some visiting lecturers pronounced a moral and intellectual curse upon the entire county because of the strong opposition met with by many of the people, and especially by the Baptists. These lecturers traveled over the entire South, touching Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and even as far as Kentucky.

In 1852 a criticism was published by one of the lecturers in Alabama which reached the people in the county. In the criticism Edgecombe was defamed and reproached, causing, as one citizen of the county put it, "the blood to chill in the people's veins for a moment and in the next a flush of indignation to rise against the infamy of disappointed and chagrined men." The charge made against the county was both false and malicious. A tem-



perance lecturer then touring Alabama and Mississippi alleged that Edgecombe was one of the most "ignorant, benighted counties" in that she repudiated the school fund until the Order of the Sons of Temperance drove them to take it, that her people were most stupid, indigent, degraded, and the least intelligent of any county, and her society the worst. And that the Old School Baptists were the meanest and most degraded set of drunkards in the State.

The calumny came with bad grace, and from those who were representatives of church organizations.

An attempt to offset the aspersions cast upon the county was made June 26, 1852. An article appeared in the *Farmers' Journal*, published at Bath, N. C., and edited by John F. Thompkins, in which it was pointed out that Edgecombe, according to the University of North Carolina statistics, led all other counties in North Carolina in graduates who returned to the county to engage in agriculture. The *Journal* also stated that men from other counties and States were anxious to buy farms in the county for their sons, not that they believed the land better than in other counties, but for the reason that there was in the county a spirit of coöperation and a spirit of enterprise which "was not to be seen in any other State." It was also shown that the Baptists were an intelligent, moral, honest, and patriotic set of citizens.

The Sons of Temperance, realizing the situation, offered a resolution to counteract the propaganda carried on by the temperance lecturers. One month after the appearance of the defense of the county there appeared in the Tarboro paper the following: "It was avowed that the Edgecombe Division, No. 202, Sons of Temperance Society, declare their determination not to submit to any law either of the National or Grand Division, whereby the advocacy of any law similar to the Maine liquor law, or any legislation whatever on the subject, is made part of their creed." A copy of the resolutions was sent to the *Spirit of the Age* for publication.

It was also stated by Joseph Cobb, of Tarboro, that the principal charges, which resulted in the revising of the local organization's attitude, were due to the temperance lecturers being prohibited from entering Baptist churches. This issue was well aired, and considerable prejudice existed against the organization. Restitution was then made for the proposed plight the people were then

placed in. J. C. Knight, a magistrate of the county, supported the Baptists and gave ample pretext for lodging a protest when a notice for a Mr. White, a lecturer, to appear in the Baptist churches. The matter was deferred, and, like all nonessential issues, harmony was restored and order returned.

The Sons of Temperance subsequently disbanded. In January, 1867, it was revived in Tarboro as the Friends of Temperance. It was composed of the following officers: David Pender, president; William Howard, assistant president; H. A. Crenshaw, financial secretary; George T. Williams, treasurer; Thomas W. Tolar, conductor; I. B. Palamountain, assistant conductor; William R. Ricks, inside sentinel; Henry Williams, outside sentinel, with several additional members. By October, 1867, the society was in a flourishing condition, and became one of the most noted moral and social organizations in the county's existence.

The organization grew in usefulness and advanced the social life of the people, for which Edgecombe has always been remembered. By 1875 it had men like F. S. Wilkinson, Frank Powell, W. P. Williamson, P. S. Pender, Reverend F. Swindell, John Mallett, Orren Williams, B. Rodgers, and other men of the merchant and professional class as members. The society went out of existence shortly after 1875.

FROM 1875





TARBORO M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH



## CHAPTER XV

### METHODIST CHURCH

Prior to the American Revolution there were few Methodists in Edgecombe. The first to arrive in all probability came about 1760. They were evidently emigrants from Virginia and New England, and had the early conceptions of Methodism as taught by the Wesleys and George Whitefield. The number could not have been many, but under the guidance of Providence, it is wonderful how the doctrine spread. We read in Ashbury's Journal of a visit to Edgecombe in 1780. Unfortunately he only mentions the names of persons and creeks, but by referring to the geography of this period, his journey can be easily traced. On June 16th he crossed the Roanoke River on his way from Fluvanna County, Va., to North Carolina. His course was in all probability through Mecklenburg County, Va., thence to Halifax County, where the Roanoke was crossed. He then traveled thirty miles southward, for the next day he says: "We set off in the rain and rode over Fishing Creek to Davis, ten miles." The next day he adds twelve miles to his journey southward and probably reached Edgecombe County on the 22d. On Sunday, July 2d, he continues: "Tomorrow, I am going to Tar River." A very vivid account is given of his trip to Tar River. On Monday 3d he relates, "I set out for Tar River. After riding about five miles was told I could not cross Bear Swamp, but by the guidance of a Baptist friend came through that and two very deep creeks."<sup>1</sup> During Bishop Ashbury's visit to Gates County Elizabeth Norfleet is mentioned as being one of the first to embrace religion. She was probably of the family of Marmaduke Norfleet. The Norfleets, in the early days, were Methodists, and only withdrew from this church after the Civil War.

In 1772 Joseph Pilmoor made a visit through the eastern counties and is given the credit of having been the first Methodist preacher to visit North Carolina. At the time there seems to have been no church organization nearer the county than at Bath Town, at the mouth of the Pamlico River. By 1775, however, the fire of Methodism spread as a result of a revival held by George Shad-

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<sup>1</sup> These must have been Swift and Fishing Creeks.

ford, a celebrated minister of Halifax County, and a few years later took a foothold in Edgecombe. At the Methodist Conference held at Baltimore, 1775, the Baltimore Circuit, already comprising a tremendous area, was enlarged so as to embrace Halifax and Bertie counties in North Carolina. Through the efforts of Edward Dromgoole, the early Irish convert of Baltimore, Methodism increased, and in 1782, Jesse Lee, then a young local preacher in North Carolina, received a letter from Caleb B. Pedicord, preacher in charge of Sussex County, in Virginia, asking him to assist Edward Dromgoole in the area lying north and west of Edenton.

This was really the beginning of Methodism for the county. These two men proceeded to tour the territory around Edenton, passed through Gates, Bertie, Edgecombe, and Warren counties up as far as Norfolk County, Virginia. They traveled for sixteen days, held nineteen meetings, and formed a circuit of twenty-two members for the next conference to receive. In 1784, as a result of these men's activities, Bertie Circuit was formed, and was served by Dromgoole and Ira Ellis until 1786. This circuit was evidently changed to Halifax Circuit in 1787, for Francis Poythress was reported by the conference for that year as serving Halifax Circuit as presiding elder.

The clouds of the Revolution did not seem to check the efforts made by the Methodists to gain a foothold, for in 1780 the county was beginning to feel the influence of Methodism and received instructions from John Dickens, who had settled in Halifax County that year. Dickens was appointed to the old Bertie Circuit in 1785, which embraced a part of the old Roanoke Circuit. He had a chapel on Fishing Creek near the Halifax and Edgecombe lines, and it is possible that he also lived here. During Asbury's visit to this locality in 1780, he speaks of preaching at Whitakers Chapel near Fishing Creek. John Tunnell, Jesse Lee, and James O'Kelly also deserve credit for fostering early Methodism in the county. These three men, more than any others, laid the foundation for the faith that grew to be dear to the hearts of many in Edgecombe from 1800 to the present day. O'Kelly later became the organizer and the leader of the sect known as Christians or the Christian Church, the split of the Methodist Church resulting from the limitation placed upon a minister at a given charge. He labored in Tar River Circuit for some time and received regular appointment here in 1780.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A circuit usually comprised several counties and had more than one preacher.

The records are searched in vain to find some regular meeting house in Tarboro for the early Methodists. Evidently there had not been one erected. However, all the facts indicate that the faith was growing. Especially was this true after the Revolution. In 1792, Asbury again reports his visit, this time to Tarboro, and says, "I find we have had a good work in the eastern district of North Carolina." He held a conference with thirty-one preachers at Green Hill on January 19, 1792. Eight days later he again passed through Tarboro on his way to Orange County. Again in 1795 he preached at Mr. Clayton's near Halifax, then crossed Tar River and Town Creek and arrived at I. Sheppard's, where he says: "We had all things richly to enjoy. I had my trials and my spirit was greatly afflicted and humbled. I was glad to get alone to pour out my soul unto God."

In 1796 the first positive indication that no church existed was given out by Mr. Asbury himself. On March 8th he held services at the Widow Philip's on Swift Creek with a large congregation. He relates that his text was "awful" Amos vii, 2: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of bearing the words of the Lord."

On Friday, the 9th, Mr. Asbury reached Tarboro and gives valuable information as to conditions at Tarboro. His account is as follows: "They had made a fire in the small apartment at the courthouse and I thought it was for preaching, but it was for dancing, and the violin lay on the table. Mr. Clement <sup>1</sup> was kind enough to stop the scene, and we had a serious congregation to hear, to whom I preached on Hebrew viii, 9-11. There were two or three houses open to me in town, but I lodged three miles out at Brother Toole's." <sup>2</sup>

From this account it would be safe in asserting that there was no Methodist Church in the town in 1796. It was not unusual that in perceiving that a crowd was congregated for worldly amusement, Mr. Asbury should have taken the advantage of the situation in order to have preached to them. This, no doubt, happened in his ministry in this country. On the other hand, his visit in this section was for the purpose of preaching, and had he

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<sup>1</sup> Evidently William Clements, who was secretary of the Episcopal conventions held in Tarboro, 1790-1794.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Toole, whose home was Shiloh.

merely preached to a body of young people who had gathered for the dance, he would have most likely gathered a congregation of believers that night or the following day and preached a sermon. This he did not do, for he does not mention holding a service and writes that the following day he proceeded to a Mr. Forbes' in Pitt County.

In 1799 Mr. Asbury again visited Edgecombe and mentions for the first time the erection of a church. It may be safe in concluding, therefore, that while the county contained believers of the Methodist doctrine, as evidenced by Mr. Asbury's calling Mr. Toole "Brother," that the first church was erected sometime between 1796 and 1799. In his visit in February, 1799, Mr. Asbury said he did not attend the Rainbow Meeting House because of illness. This church must have been located between Tarboro and Shiloh. Today there remains the indication of a church. A graveyard is located near the county road. Dr. T. H. Hall's remains rest there and his family were known to have been of the Methodist faith.

While on his journey Mr. Asbury administered the sacrament, which is conclusive evidence that there were a few members in the vicinity of Tarboro. He also mentions having visited Seth Spaight's and sympathized with him for the loss of his wife. Thursday night, the 28th, was spent at Mr. Toole's, and he was also entertained at Mr. Hodge's, near Sessum Bridge on Fishing Creek.

The fact that Mr. Asbury visited Edgecombe is not of as much interest as the influence he exercised in causing the people to take an interest in the church. That this resulted seems to have been true. By 1801 Toole's meeting house was erected near Tarboro. Mr. Whatcoat, who later became a bishop of the English branch of the church, visited with Bishop Asbury in 1801 and preached here from the text in Zachariah ix, 12. Mr. Asbury declares his choice was Isaiah i, 9. The party remained overnight at Mr. Toole's.

There was also another church in the county, known as Prospect Chapel, which was opened to all denominations and probably at the extreme northern end of the county. Mr. Asbury began to pay visits there about 1800. The spiritual conditions throughout



the circuit was spoken of by Mr. Asbury: "Oh, the awful state of religion in this circuit."

Early in the year 1802 Methodism took on new life. A new chapel was built at Tarboro, and a Mr. Bellamy was the regular preacher in the town and county. Bishop Asbury and N. Snithen preached in the new chapel in February, 1802. It had probably just been completed. The sermon was in the nature of a dedication service, the text being, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." Mr. Asbury adds, "We rejoice in hope that Tarboro will yet have and receive the gospel." New names had been added to the list of church members in the persons of Mr. Guion, Mr. Bellamy, and Henry Bradford, who lived in the eastern part of the county. During the stay in Tarboro Mr. Asbury also spoke of attending Prospect Hill, which indicates the existence of still another church in the county, and was probably in the neighborhood of Mr. Bradford's, since Mr. Asbury mentions having stopped at his house.

A year later an itinerant party, consisting of Whatcoat, Asbury, and Lee, again preached in Tarboro at the new chapel. It was reported that a large crowd attended and was very attentive. The party were entertained by a Mr. Ryley. The night was spent at the Widow Toole's, whose home, as Mr. Asbury said, "was the first opened to him in Tarboro." Bishop Asbury also says that of the thirty-three families in Tarboro, very few members thereof were in the church. The principal part of the congregation, he declares, were thirty Africans. "The people," says Mr. Asbury, "have more trade than religion, more wealth than grace."

In 1809 an incident happened in the local history of Methodism which gave it a remarkable impetus. Wednesday, February 1st, of this year, the Virginia Conference was convened at Tarboro by Bishop Asbury. Eighty-four preachers were present, while seventeen preachers were admitted, making one hundred and one active preachers in the Virginia Conference.<sup>1</sup> One singular characteristic of the early church was pointed out by Bishop Asbury. He states that there were but three married men of the total number. "The high tastes of these southern folks," says Bishop Asbury, "will not permit their families to be degraded by an alliance with

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<sup>1</sup> The counties in North Carolina which had Methodist believers and had a minister were included in the Virginia conference at this time.

a Methodist traveling preacher, and thus involuntary celibacy is imposed upon us; all the better; anxiety about worldly possession does not stop our course, and we are saved from pollution of negro slavery and oppression."

The beloved Bishop McKendree, the progenitor of a man who was later to become so closely related to the church in the county, preached the ordination sermon at the conference, and Bishop Asbury preached on "Humiliation before God." At the same time Bishop McKendree ordained eight elders, and Bishop Asbury thirteen deacons. More than 2,000 people attended the meeting in the two churches, while the people offered entertainment and hospitality to those who were visiting from other places. The report of the condition of the church follows: "Our increase in members, unless we allow for a great waste by death, and less by removals, is not very encouraging. The West and South have given more than three thousand each, whereas here is not more than three hundred." The cause for this fact is explained by Bishop Asbury, and, no doubt, throws light on the stigma which was placed on the church in its early existence and even as late as the War between the States. "We are," continued Mr. Asbury, "defrauded of great numbers by the pains that are taken to keep blacks from us; their masters are afraid of the influence of our principles. Would not an amelioration in the conditions and treatment of slaves have produced more practical good to the Africans than any attempt at their emancipation? The state of the society, unhappily, does not permit of this; besides the blacks are deprived of the means of instruction; who will take the pains to lead them in the way of salvation and watch over them unto the way of salvation, and watch over them that they may not stray, but the Methodists? Well, now the masters will not let them come to hear us. What is the personal liberty of the African which he may abuse, to the salvation of his soul; how may it be compared?"

The account of the conference proceeding at Tarboro makes the early history of Methodism clearer. It has been pointed out that the majority of those in fellowship in Elgecombe were slaves with perhaps a very few freemen. Among the names of those who were mentioned as being visited by Bishop Asbury, none are known to have been members except Mr. Toole and Mr. Bellamy. This fact becomes more obvious when it is known that the most influ-

ential men of the county owned slaves—influence and wealth being determined by the number of slaves owned. Since an open stand in opposition to slavery was frequently manifested by the preachers, it was logical to expect that the owners would not ally themselves with a church which worked for their temporal disadvantage. This also explains the ostracism experienced by the early preachers. Bishop Asbury intimates this when he mentions the refusal of southerners to marry the ministers, due no doubt to the objection to the abolition efforts of the preachers. No set of men, however, merit more commendation than those pious, earnest men, who, in spite of these conditions, continued under the guidance of their conscience to preach their doctrine.

By 1812 this prejudice was not quite as effective as the three years previous. The church then had at least two families of influence; Mr. Toole's family and that of Mr. Hall, who was one of the most prominent men in the county. In January, 1812, Bishop Asbury preached at Mr. Hall's home and mentions him as "Brother Hall." At the same time, Mr. Asbury took breakfast with Mr. Austin, the head of the present Austin family in Tarboro, who was an English Baptist. He was exhorted by Mr. Asbury to conduct a prayer meeting in his house every Wednesday night. The Lewis family were also among the first to embrace the Methodist doctrine. In 1815 Bishop Asbury dined with Exum Lewis and wife, and says that they had been quickened into the faith, and that the house of their father was one of the first to receive the Methodists. It also appears that the church was again arousing the solid and determined thought of the people. Bishop Asbury spoke to a congregation of "serious people" in Edward Hall's dining-room on Sunday, February 5, 1815. The following Monday he breakfasted with Mrs. Austin, who, it seems, displayed much feeling. Bishop Asbury says, "In the trying hour, she said, 'Pray for me!'" Following this Bishop Asbury asked himself the question, "Shall a Methodist Conference assemble, a society be gathered, and a chapel be built at Tarboro?" Bishop Asbury's death occurred in March, 1816, after having given Tarboro and the county many hours and visits of his ministry.

In summarizing the Methodist local history from 1760 to 1815, the record of growth was considerable when viewed from the light of the opposition it experienced. The English church had

the law on its side, and received encouragement and support from the crown prior to the Revolution. The war brought a spirit of religious liberty, but opposition was present due to the slavery question. The Baptists in the county were numerous, and some of the strongest men of the Revolutionary times belonged to that church. The fact, also, that prior to the Revolution all Methodists were members of the English church, as well as followers of Wesley and Whitfield, gave additional pretext for antagonism. The first division came when the Revolution began and Wesley advised them in 1784 to unite in one body with superintendents, who later were called bishops, with a system of church government called the "discipline."

After the death of Bishop Asbury, Methodism lapsed for a few years. His occasional visits constituted the chief source of encouragement to the few scattered believers. It appears that the church in Tarboro went out of existence, the few members left, worshipped in the public meeting house. However, there remained chapels in other places in the county, one near Whitakers and another about seven miles north of Leggetts. These churches held a big camp meeting August 29, 1821. A successful revival was the result. A writer who attended this camp meeting says that there were forty tents and seventy ministers present. The meeting lasted ten days, with thirty-five converts received into the church the last two days. Shortly following this meeting a successful revival was held at Bradford's meeting house by the Associate Reformed Methodists.

During September, 1827, the Methodists of Edgecombe met in Whitakers in obedience to a resolution passed in March. and called a convention to select delegates to attend the General Conference to be held in Baltimore in November. Exum Lewis, of Tarboro, was president of the local convention, and he made an appeal for the people to throw their energy and talent in reviving Methodism before it was too late to redeem the church. This same year the church began to hold services at Ellis meeting house with Reverend W. M. Bellamy as preacher. This earnest, simple hearted minister survived the early struggle at Tarboro; created a spirit of coöperation with Bishop Asbury and subsequently became a regular traveling preacher in Edgecombe.



H.T. Hudson, in his minutes of the early church, refers to Tar River Church, which was still retained in the conference records, as an indication of the growth with which Methodism was increasing, "a seed pregnant with useful harvest." This county experienced a remarkable growth from 1821 to 1860. Methodism began to spread rapidly in other counties from Edgecombe, while Halifax on the north, the banner county, was most notable in its increase.

It was probably in 1830, about nine years after the dark period of Methodism, when Tarboro, which was still designated as a part of Tar River Circuit, built a new church. The various conferences which met prior to this time mention no pastorate, and it is inferred that the suspended church in Tarboro had not been revived until 1830 or the next year. The Methodist Church the next year was added to the conference with six members. The celebrated preacher, Peter Doub, had charge of the Tar River Circuit for a number of years. It was probably during his ministry that a large camp meeting was held at the Associated Methodist Church at Stantonburg in 1830. Again in 1836 Edgecombe experienced a revival both here and at Tarboro under the preaching of Bennett T. Blake, a very passionate and energetic minister.

In 1834 Lawrence meeting house, which was evidently erected a short time before, was a center for services, and the church at Tarboro began to grow and to increase in religious interest. Reverend Thomas R. Brame and Reverend Berry Watson appear to have been stationed in the county that year. The *Tarboro Southerner* gives a very vivid account of the activities of these two men, and Methodism was benefited by their ministrations. In 1838 the church at Tarboro was in good favor and standing with the conference and was placed on the regular minutes for appointments. Reverend Robert P. Bibb was sent to the church in 1838 and remained four consecutive years. About this time Sunday schools reached Edgecombe. The church at Tarboro in all probability established a Sunday school in 1838. Sometime about 1838 the county of Edgecombe was changed from Tar River Circuit and placed in the Washington district, in which it is at this time. At the conference held at Mocksville, December, 1840, Edgecombe churches made a good showing, having received several additional members. William E. Pell became presiding elder of

the district and Reverend P. W. Archer was sent to the church at Tarboro.

Edgewcombe County in the early forties bore a bad reputation for its treatment of the Methodists. Social and spiritual opposition remained in force until after the year 1865. In a reminiscient account of Edgewcombe, in which it was compared to the year 1880, a traveling minister of the early days, being no less than Reverend John E. Edwards, D.D., who became the famous Virginia preacher, alludes to Edgewcombe as the stronghold of the "Ironsides" and "Iron-clad" Baptists. He also declared that the Methodists made no show in the county. He says, "Indeed, it would sound incredible to the ears of the present generation<sup>1</sup> to state in solid terms the estimate in which the Methodists were held by the followers of old 'Ironside,' 'water bound' Father Lawrence,"<sup>2</sup> in those days. He and the churches he presided over denounced the Methodists as "Wolves in sheep's clothing." Mr. Edwards intimated also that it was unsafe for a Methodist preacher to go about the country about 1830 and 1835. He records a personal experience which occurred to him and Reverend Henry Peck in 1840, when they were refused lodging for the night by three or four families while on their way from the New Bern Conference in 1840. It seems that the Methodist preachers were commonly recognized by their mode of traveling on horseback with the usual stuffed saddlebag, umbrella, and overcoat. Also there was the ever-present "round breasted coat." The account is as follows: "Brother Peck and myself were turned off successively by three or four families until dark overtook us, on an unknown road, and left us to the apprehension that we might have to sleep in the woods that night. Finally we saw a light glimmering in the dark. We pulled down the fence—not knowing where to find the gate or drawbars—and rode through the open field to the house. After a parley of considerable length we were permitted to stay all night; but we were very careful not to reveal the fact that we were Methodist preachers. While the good woman of the house was preparing supper for us, I commenced *singing*. Brother Peck joined in with me. It was some old melody, not now remembered. When we paused, the simple

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Edwards was writing in 1883, nearly 50 years after the events recorded occurred.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua Lawrence, leader of the Primitive Baptists.

hearted woman said: 'Well, that is one of the prettiest *hime* tunes I ever heered. Won't you sing us another?' We did sing, and the singing got us a good supper and breakfast, for the family was in comfortable circumstances. We learned before leaving the next morning that the gentleman and his wife were not iron-side Baptists."

The Methodist churches had grown to such proportions in 1840 and 1850 that visible signs of future usefulness was in evidence. In 1843 Reverend S. Pierce officiated in Tarboro and movements were commenced to erect more churches in the county. In 1850 the Methodists had four comfortable and spacious churches, an aggregate membership of 300 and a total church property value of \$1,300.

In the upper part of the county, near the Wilson County line, near the Primitive Baptist Church at Pleasant Hill, the first Methodist sermon in this vicinity was preached by Nathan Anderson in a hall owned by a resident in the community. The Baptists offered strong opposition to the Methodists for many years. The Reverend Mr. Anderson, however, kept a regular appointment for two or three years. In the year 1852 Edgecombe circuit appeared for the first time as a part of the Washington district, of which Reverend H. H. Gibbons was presiding elder. During the year Mr. Gibbons conducted a successful revival near Wilson, and a society was formed with the following members: Mr. and Mrs. Rountree, Mr. and Mrs. Gray Ellis, James Rountree, Colonel John Farmer, Mrs. Jonathan Rountree, and a few others, all of whom lived on the present county line. Colonel John Farmer, William Daniel, and W. D. Rountree were made stewards. During the year 1853 Methodism in this section of the county was fairly established under the efforts of H. H. Gibbons and J. L. Cotten.

By the latter part of the year 1852 the county had five local preachers, 470 active white members, and 152 colored. There were also three Sunday schools, three superintendents and twenty teachers. These Sunday schools had a library of 400 books on various religious subjects, and several class meetings were conducted by the lay members of the various churches.

Reverend Henry H. Gibbons was the general preacher in the county at the time, being sent there in 1852. At his first arrival

the church had only 120 white members and 14 colored; two Sunday schools, one superintendent, 13 teachers, and 63 scholars. The conference collection amounted to only \$29.35. The increase was, therefore, indeed material as evidenced by the comparison with the above.

The following year Mr. Gibbons was given as assistant, James L. Cotten, while R. J. Carson and F. H. Baring were pastors at Tarboro and Tarboro Mission. The work paid \$90.00 for the conference and the bishop, and contributed \$104.75 for missionary endeavor. Mr. Carson was a very active worker and a man of considerable prominence. He was president of the board of trustees for the North Carolina Conference and a man of piety. He was also president of the North Carolina Missionary Society and a member of the executive committee of the North Carolina Educational Society. He presided frequently over the educational discussions in the conference.

In 1854 a great revival was conducted in the various churches in the county and over 664 white members were added to the society. The Sunday schools, however, were sadly lacking in attention and only fifty-five new scholars were enrolled for the year. The number of negro members was increased by seventeen new additions. Mr. Carson remained here until the fall of 1855, when he was sent to another charge. The Methodist Church which had recently been constructed at Bethesda experienced a successful revival held by Reverend R. J. Carson in September before his departure in November, 1855.

By 1855 the old church at Tarboro was insufficient to meet the needs of the increasing membership, and a movement was started to build a new church. The Reverend Mr. Guthrie being at the time in charge. F. L. Bond, a very prosperous merchant at Tarboro, was an active worker in the church, and was a member of the board of stewards. He acted with an unselfish principle in building the church and much credit is due him in the campaign. In the early part of 1856 he inserted the following in the *Tarboro Southerner*: "Wanted, \$1,500 to complete the Methodist Church now in progress of erection in the town of Tarboro. Relying as I do in the liberality of the people of Edgecombe for contributing towards so noble an enterprise, I feel that I hazard



nothing in assuming the responsibility for the completion of this place of religious worship."

The attempt on Mr. Bond's part was highly commendable, for raising \$1,500 in those days was no small task. His love for Methodism must have been above the average, for in his efforts to raise the money he placed his business interests and his financial status in jeopardy. Realizing the situation he informed his creditors and his endorsers not to be alarmed, for they would not be hurt.

The new church was finished in October, 1856, and was located on the church lot adjacent to the present hospital. On the fourth Monday in October Reverend C. F. Deems dedicated the church in the presence of a large and attentive congregation. This meeting was historic for the personages present. Reverend Thomas G. Lowe, the celebrated Methodist preacher and silver-tongued orator from Halifax, and known from the mountains to the sea, and Reverend William Gloss, of no small repute, were present and assisted in the service. In 1856 a new circuit was created out of the old Edgecombe Circuit, known as Tar River Circuit, named in honor of the old Tar River Circuit, which included Martin, Pitt, Edgecombe, and other counties bordering on Tar River. This circuit took away over 500 white members and forty-six colored. The work this year, therefore, showed a decided decrease in spite of the fact that nineteen new additions were reported.

The rise of a new church and the addition of new members of influence made a new era in local Methodism. The conditions which existed prior to 1856 are vividly described by John Frederick Mallet, who later became associated with the Methodists in the county. He traveled and preached to various congregations in Edgecombe about 1853 and sold books, among which was Wheeler's "History of North Carolina." In addition he was the first colporteur in this section of the State. He reports that the people were ignorant in general as to the history of their church and church members, and that they also paid little attention to education. He met with much opposition from the Baptists. The conditions seem to have been due to the contentment of the people, who being baptized it was thought that all else was superficial. The zeal for church work and endeavor was sadly lacking.

Reverend Mr. Carson was returned to Washington district in 1858, as Presiding Elder and Reverend Lemon Shell was sent to Tar River Church. Tarboro Church had about twenty-nine white members and thirteen colored. The Sunday school was in fair condition with a library of 135 books, a good superintendent and several teachers and forty scholars.

The church at Tarboro was hardly more than completed before the opening scenes of the war of 1861 checked church activity and left the people adrift in church matters. Reverend Joseph B. Bobbit was at Tarboro station in 1860, and he succeeded in establishing a colored mission on Tar River that year, with M. H. Hight as regular pastor. Swift Creek Mission, under Islam H. Hill, was also erected and the churches generally throughout the county was just beginning the experience of earnest and effective operation.

The zealous attempts for spiritual elevation were consistently carried out by Reverend Mr. Hight, who conducted a revival in Tarboro in 1862 and 1863. The people, however, were too absorbed in war and secular matters to give much attention to church work. The meetings, in spite of this condition, resulted in twenty-five or thirty converts to Methodism. The church also had assistance during the war from Reverend Mr. Mallet, who had been living in Greenville, but had left Washington to escape from the Union army. His wife had died, and he sent his family to Tarboro to live with a daughter by his first wife, Matilda Anne Keech. The Keech family at this time, as well as at the present, were devout and consistent members of the Methodist Church. Mr. Mallet frequently preached at Tarboro and visited the church as late as 1884. He lived for some time at Rocky Mount and conducted a farm in Nash County.

The closing days of the war found Reverend J. W. Jenkins in charge at Tarboro in 1866. In January Reverend M. S. Moran, the presiding elder of the Washington district, called a meeting of the circuit board of stewards to meet in Tarboro on July 12th. The stewards were H. X. Palmer, E. A. Thorn, Marcus Battle, R. E. Weathersbee, Charles Latham, John Author, James Clark, and S. A. Long. The matter of church business in the county was discussed and an arrangement for the selection of lay delegates to attend the General Annual Conference was made. The

meeting resulted in effecting local coöperation in church matters and created a new interest in the church which had gone down during the war. The ladies of the county and Tarboro, responding to an appeal issued after this local conference, held a festival and fair at Rocky Mount on December 12, where useful and ornamental articles were sold for the benefit of the church at Rocky Mount, then under construction. In addition to the sale of articles an entertainment was staged and the Duke de Sperry was featured as a source of attraction. The church at Rocky Mount was then in Edgecombe Circuit. In 1888 the Edgecombe Circuit was cut out and Battleboro and Rocky Mount stations were erected. The two churches had one preacher, a Sunday school at each church, 264 members in fellowships at both churches, and a church property valuation of \$5,000.

The annual conference in 1870 was held in the church at Tarboro by Bishop McKendree, the son of Bishop McKendree who was an associate of Bishop Asbury. His visits to Edgecombe County were more or less frequent. In 1871 a revival of unusual interest took place near Tarboro. From the results a church was built about seven miles from Tarboro. The name McKendree was given it in honor of Bishop McKendree. This church was principally indebted to Dr. Nobles and David Britt for its origin under the direction of Reverend C. C. Dodson. Dr. Nobles was a comparatively early settler in the county, having arrived in about 1849. He was the son of Warren Tillett Nobles. His father died in Warren County, where Dr. Nobles was born. His early education was obtained at Louisburg and was completed at Cincinnati, Ohio. He became a physician and was associated with the late Dr. Charles Garret. He moved to Tarboro about 1852. Dr. Nobles became interested in politics and ran for the House of Representatives, but was defeated by a negro by the name of Taylor. Later he became a Populist and then returned to the Democratic party in 1903.

Prior to the movement to build McKendree Church Dr. Nobles, a strong Methodist, had his membership, with that of his wife, at Temperance Hall, one of the oldest churches in the county. Temperance Hall Church replaced an old store, which was used for a place of meeting for several years. Dr. Nobles wanted a church nearer his home and gave the land for McKendree Church. Mr.

Britt also gave considerable material for the construction. The church was deeded to the conference in 1875, and at the time had about twenty members. The church was perhaps made up of the best type of Edgecombe citizens, all being prosperous farmers. In addition to the Nobles and the Britts, the Jenkins and the Gorchams were all early members of the church. The family of Killibrews were also early members and the family is represented there today. Joshua Killibrew, the pioneer of the family, was a one time a representative of Edgecombe County in the Legislature. He was a tailor by profession and came from England. His son, Washington Killibrew, was the grandson of Mack Killibrew. Another son of Joshua Killibrew was G. W. Killibrew, the father of C. B. Killibrew, born March 8, 1818, and died October 26, 1889. C. B. Killibrew was also a member of this church.

On the completion of McKendree Church it was placed in the Elm City Circuit with J. C. Humble as pastor. The church has had a prosperous existence, and at the present has about fifty members and a thriving Sunday school. It has given a few young men to the ministry, the first being J. C. Humble, who was licensed there. About twenty years ago the church was taken out of the Elm City district, and now bears the name of McKendree Circuit, in honor of Bishop McKendree.

The church known as Temperance Hall is perhaps a survival of one of the most ancient churches in the county. It was established by the late Dr. Mercer's grandfather, W. P. Mercer. He was a philanthropic member of Edgecombe County more than a hundred years ago. The origin of this church dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Sons of Temperance used the hall upstairs for their meetings. The first floor was used as a meeting house in which all preachers of any denomination might preach in passing through the county. When the Sons of Temperance were disbanded about 1860 the church was in a dilapidated condition and was torn down. It was shortly afterward rebuilt and used as a church for all denominations for several years. The Mercer family had been Methodists since early in the nineteenth century. When the late Dr. Mercer's father died the son received custody of the building, but with a provisional clause in the will. The stipulation permitted the church to be turned over to the Methodist Society, provided this organization



would pay the sum of \$400 to the Mercer heirs. The deed also specified the exclusive use of the Methodists at their own pleasure. The late Dr. W. P. Mercer carried out the wishes of his father by assisting in paying a preacher in charge. Sometimes Dr. Mercer would pay the preacher's entire salary. The church has had a uniform membership of forty and a Sunday school, with one exception, of about fifty pupils. About fifteen years ago, when Dr. Mercer was in his most active career, Temperance Hall had the largest Sunday school in the State, according to the size and conveniences of the church. The number at its highest was 250 active scholars. Mrs. Mercer was superintendent for several years and was active in this capacity in 1914.

The services of Mr. and Mrs. Mercer are worthy of record in that they have proved loyal to the faith which they believed.

While the rise of Methodist Churches in the county has not been rapid, the growth was continuous. In 1875 the results of preaching near the county line resulted in the erection of the first considerable church in Wilson. John Deans, Josiah Wimborne, and Nathan Anderson, of Snow Hill, organized a congregation over the store of Rountree and Company in 1854. In 1875, as a direct cause of this action, a church was erected on Church Street in Wilson, composed of this first congregation. Willie Rountree, W. M. Gay, Calib Parker, Willie Daniel, Calvin Parker, W. Murray, Robert Johnson, and other prominent members, composed the first Methodist Church in this now thriving city. At first there was no regular preacher, but the conference which met the following year supplied the needs of this church.

In the meantime, Swift Creek Mission was enlarged under the leadership of H. H. Cunningham and F. D. Swindell, who succeeded him in 1874 and carried out his religious endeavor with credibility. Mr. Swindell had been actively connected with the Tarboro and county churches for some time, having been pastor of the regular appointment in the county in 1872. In 1875 the records show him riding the Tarboro Circuit, which was changed from Edgecombe Circuit in that year.

During the previous discussion omission has been made of the spiritual development of the colored people, who adhered to this faith. The fact that there were considerable numbers who gave allegiance to Methodism necessitated a place of worship. For

several years it was the custom to permit the colored membership to occupy a separate place in the white churches. A relic of this custom is yet observable in the older churches in the county. Galleries were constructed for the negroes in the Baptist and Methodist churches, while the Episcopal churches made provision by setting apart the rear seats for the slaves prior to the war. As results of reconstruction, racial feeling ran to a high pitch, and it was deemed advisable to establish separate churches. In fact negro sentiment demanded freedom in worship as well as in politics. Consequently, the Methodists began to look to this end.

Following the General Conference of 1866, the course adopted was a separate church building. The town of Tarboro was petitioned for assistance and the town commissioners conveyed to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church a part of the tract of land near Tar River landing and lying on Hendrick's Creek. A church was constructed here soon after 1870. The form of discipline and church administration differed in no essential feature from the white church and requires no comment.

The continuous growth and rise of churches by the year 1880 placed the Methodist in strong numerical position, exceeded only by the Baptists. The total number of churches being nine with a substantial number in fellowship. By 1886 further progress was made by the erection of three more Sunday schools and the addition of twenty-four officers and teachers and 116 scholars. The circuit gave an annual report of 274 members, or a gain of sixty over the previous year, and church property was valued at \$7,500. Also, \$1,005 was spent that year on church and parsonage maintenance. The churches in Tarboro and South Edgecombe had 278 members and church property worth \$3,500. In 1888 Tarboro was designated as a separate station and had 284 members, a church worth \$6,000 and a parsonage worth \$2,000. Swift Creek Mission had two preachers, 324 members, five churches valued at \$1,500.

Three years later all the churches showed a substantial increase and the Tarboro church went from 118 to 215. South Edgecombe Circuit, which had been established about five years, increased to 402 or nearly as many as was in both the churches at Tarboro and South Edgecombe in 1888.

In the meantime, two new churches were erected in the county, one at South Rocky Mount and the other at Conetoe. The church at South Rocky Mount had 112 members and the church at Conetoe had 169 members, five societies for young people and church auxiliaries and four additional rural churches that made up Conetoe Circuit.

In January, 1891, the official board of the Methodist Church at Tarboro met and resolved to build a chapel on their lot in West Tarboro. The purpose proposed was to carry out the missionary idea then prevailing in the various churches in the town. A building committee, composed of W. E. Fountain, chairman; T. H. Gatlin, N. M. Lawrence, and W. D. Sharpe, was selected. The work began almost immediately, and a chapel, known as Keech's Chapel, was erected.

This chapel has had an unusual history for so few years' existence. One of the largest revivals recorded on the annals of Methodism occurred there under the Reverend Jones. The stability of the church organization, however, has invariably proved uncertain, and the church's success and usefulness constantly fluctuated.

In like manner, Dean's Chapel at the old Tarboro Cotton Mills<sup>1</sup> was erected. This chapel preceded the one at West Tarboro in date, and has usually been used as a Sunday school. The chapels were named in honor of some of the members of the church who had been noted for church usefulness. Hence the name of Keech's Chapel in honor of Bryan J. Keech, and Dean's Chapel in honor of W. T. Dean.

The church at Pinetops is of recent date and is one of the three churches on McKendree Circuit.<sup>2</sup> The Methodist Church at Pinetops, which was erected several years ago, has a close relation to the church at Sparta. Repeated attempts had been made to establish a church there for many years, especially after the town was well under way and gave signs of prosperity. St. Mary's Chapel was situated near the village of St. Lewis. A Methodist Church was at Sparta, four miles away, and a Presbyterian Church was also within close proximity. This fact was discouraging, and the matter was postponed until 1906, when the church at Sparta was sold to the Universalists, and the Methodists, not having a place

<sup>1</sup> Now Hart's cotton mill.

<sup>2</sup> Temperance Hall, McKendree Church, and Pinetops.

to worship in the vicinity, the church at St. Lewis was moved to Pinetops and served for membership for both communicants at Sparta and St. Lewis. The land was purchased from the Macclesfield Company and deeded to W. L. Dunn, D. S. Gardener, and W. D. Boyee. The land at St. Lewis had been given by the Suggs family and went back to the Suggs heirs.

The church at Pinetops was mostly composed of women. Ed Pitt, W. L. Dunn, and Frank Walston being the first three men who were members. There were also very few children connected with the church at its formation. It had a total enrollment of sixty children and adults in its Sunday school about 1914, with J. H. Jenkins as superintendent. A parsonage was built at the rear of the church about 1915, and the preacher serving McKendree Circuit, living in Tarboro, moved to Pinetops that year. All other places contributed to the building of the parsonage except Tarboro.

Thus in the course of events from 1860 to 1900 Methodism grew from the weakest to be one of the strongest denominations in the county. When it had the misfortune to lose by fire its church built in Tarboro, 1856, a modern and beautiful structure supplanted the old. It made sacrifices both in means and numbers for the war of 1861, gave its church bell, with the other churches, at the request of the Confederate Government, and withal it has "fought a good fight and kept the faith." It has brought peace and joy to hundreds, and faithfully continues the good work begun by Bishops McKendree, Asbury and other pioneer leaders of the church.















